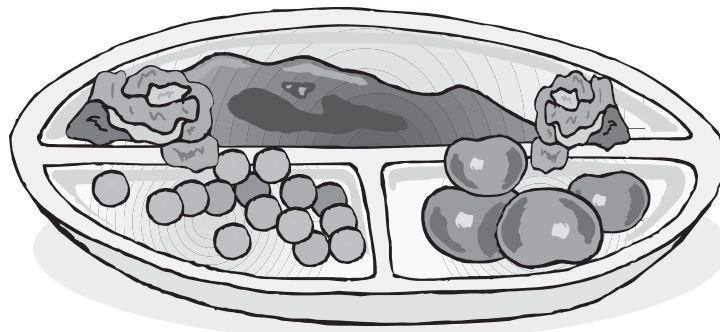


Remembering the Man Who Brought Us TV Dinners

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Ted Landphair, VOAnews.com

- 1 Recently an American pioneer — or rotten scoundrel, depending upon your point of view — died at age 83.
- 2 His name was Gerry Thomas. He's responsible for that icon of convenience foods: the TV dinner. In 1948, he was a traveling salesman for Swanson Foods, which was busy shipping eggs and chickens and turkeys all over the country. One day, company officials were aghast¹ to learn that more than 200,000 kilos of plucked fowl were sitting, unused, in chilled boxcars. What to do with them?
- 3 Mr. Thomas remembered that an airplane stewardess had served him a meal in a compartmentalized tray that kept the gravy on his mashed potatoes from sloshing over into his dessert. What if Swanson were to cook the chickens and turkeys, cut the meat into slices, and package it with other fixin's into frozen meals in trays, wrapped in foil?
- 4 Swanson loved the idea and turned it into a multi-million dollar business — in part because of its inspired name: the "TV dinner." You peeled back the foil so steam could escape, popped the aluminum tray in the oven, ate the meal in your easy chair when it was done, and then discarded the tray. No muss, no fuss.
- 5 For this masterpiece of simplicity, Gerry Thomas got a \$100 raise and a small bonus. As his Washington Post obituary pointed out, Mr. Thomas "came to regret" not asking Swanson to give him, instead, a penny for each dinner sold.



- 6 Not everybody liked TV dinners — or Mr. Thomas for inventing them. He got hate mail from men, in particular, who said their wives were also plopping in front of the tube and eating these things, and no longer fixing them yummy, home-cooked meals. So we pause to remember Gerry Thomas: frozen-food legend — and homewrecker!

¹aghost: shocked or horrified

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Use the passage to answer questions 17 – 22.

17. Find at least two details from the passage that support the statement below.

Frozen dinners often give up flavor in exchange for convenience.

Write your answer in the **Answer Document**. (2 points)

Skill *Main Idea and Supporting Details*

18. Which of the following statements based on the passage is an opinion?
- A. Some people disliked Mr. Thomas for inventing the TV dinner.
 - B. "TV dinner" was an inspired choice of names for the invention.
 - C. Swanson shipped eggs, chicken, and turkeys all over the country.
 - D. The idea for the TV dinner came from an airplane meal.

Skill *Fact and Opinion*



Hint—Feeling words do not always signal an opinion. Evaluate the entire statement before making your choice.

19. What made the invention of the TV dinner necessary?

- A. The invention of the television reduced demand for fresh eggs and fowl.
- B. Gerry Thomas did not like the food he received in airplane meals.
- C. Swanson needed a way to ship chickens and turkeys around the country.
- D. Swanson had a large number of unsold chilled chickens and turkeys.

Skill *Cause and Effect*



Hint—Use your notes to find and read the relevant section of text again. Which choice actually caused the invention?

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20. “Mr. Thomas remembered that an airplane stewardess had served him a meal in a **compartmentalized** tray that kept the gravy on his mashed potatoes from sloshing over into his dessert.”

In the sentence above, what is the meaning of the word formed by the word **compartmental** and the suffix **-ized**?

- A. separated into sections
- B. made neater
- C. a part or area
- D. carefully planned

Skill *Word Structure*

21. “Recently **an American pioneer — or rotten scoundrel**, depending upon your point of view — died at age 83.”

What was the author’s main reason for using the words **an American pioneer — or rotten scoundrel** in the sentence above?

- A. to illustrate how important Gerry Thomas was to this country
- B. to prove that frozen dinners are not as good as home-cooked dinners
- C. to show that there are two extremely different opinions on this subject
- D. to compare Gerry Thomas and the Swanson Foods company

Skill *Persuasion*

22. How did Gerry Thomas feel about the payment he received for his idea? Support your answer with two details from the passage.

Write your answer in the **Answer Document**. (4 points)

Skill *Conclusion, Prediction, and Synthesis*



Hint—The answer to the first part of the question is in the passage. Think about the details to understand *why* he felt that way.



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