

Zippering Up For Success

**THE STORY OF TADAO, THE
KID FROM A JAPANESE
VILLAGE WHO DOMINATED
THE WORLD OF ZIPPERS.**



A letter from the publisher



Dear Reader,

This playful book-series is a publication of AlligatorZone®, where students meet startups, an impact initiative as well as a community of life-long learners who explore the world through the eyes of the entrepreneurial problem-solver.

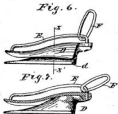
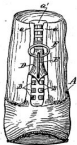
AlligatorZone® is proud to present this series of stories and related playful explorations designed to surface the delightful conversationalist that lurks within each of us, and to shine a light on our charismatic side, while we explore the world of future careers, and perhaps find a calling, sooner than later. This activity book can be enjoyed by students of ages ten through the teens. In fact, any life-long learner will enjoy this booklet.

If you choose to read this book aloud, enunciate like your favorite TV newscaster, actor or YouTuber. If you post it online outside of AlligatorZone, tag @alligatorzone or even #alligatorzone. If reading aloud, slow down so that audiences of all backgrounds may understand you clearly. This exercise fine-tunes our personality, making people pause and listen when we speak. That's because the knowledge in this book series will appeal to most people, and this exercise powers up style with substance.

These stories and explorations will make you look at the world through the eyes of an entrepreneur and observe opportunities to solve problems everywhere around you. Included with this story, is a set of questions to jog your thinking, and an activity for you to go on a journey of discovery, somewhat like an investigative journalist. After you read this book, you can continue learning about more lessons drawn from this book through additional programs offered by AlligatorZone online.

LIFE-LESSONS: With this exploration-book and program, readers will understand, among other things, that

- opportunities to improve things and make a difference exist all around us
- industries require a variety of skills
- there is something to learn even from the most mundane things around us
- the world is an encyclopedia, when we don't hesitate to ask questions
- with practice, one can learn to ask the right questions and solve problems
- persistent efforts can accumulate to grand outcomes despite humble beginnings
- your voice matters
- even learning to think like an innovator makes one a standout leader
- mindfulness is possible in everyday activities
- understanding a company and its leaders makes us better consumers and investors
- those who make a difference do it regardless of their circumstances, and
- curiosity, listening and observation are super-powers that we all have and can use everyday



Enjoy more advanced explorations and collaborative learning that we bring to you by extending stories from this book to an online environment as a member of AlligatorZone. Visit AlligatorZone.org for more.

Have fun with this story and exploration.

Ramesh Sambasivan
Instructional Designer
AlligatorZone® Academy
July 22, 2020



Zippering Up For Success.

(To be read aloud to an audience at home, in school, or online)



Once upon a time, over a hundred years ago, in the remote Japanese village of Uozu, in Toyoma prefecture lived young Tadao Yoshida. Born and raised in a poor family, Tadao loved the outdoors as a child. He played a lot, and was good at catching fish. Growing up, he became an avid reader, and was particularly fond of reading biographies. His favorite was the biography of Andrew Carnegie, the famous Scottish-American industrialist and philanthropist who was known for growing the American steel industry. Carnegie's approach of doing good for others would later inspire Tadao's philosophy in life and work, which he called 'The Cycle of Goodness'.

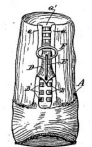
At the age of 20, Tadao decided to leave behind his village and its harsh winters to seek a bright future in the city of Tokyo. Tadao took up a job at a small trading company and excelled in his work. Soon he was sent by his employer to China to buy luxury items to bring back and sell in Japan. Unfortunately, in 1932, Tadao and his employer, a Japanese man named Jumpei Furuya lost everything during a conflict between the then Republic of China and the Empire of Japan. The company that Tadao worked for went bankrupt. Heartbroken and desperate, Tadao was weeping while Jumpei was thinking of ways to come out of the bad situation. He encouraged Tadao to take some of the remaining items, which were zippers, and do something with them to make money. Tadao felt gratitude towards his boss for teaching him how to pick himself up in the most dire of situations and worked hard to get back on his feet. At the age of 25, Tadao became a manufacturer and a seller of zippers. However, the Pacific War broke out in 1941 and in the ensuing air raids everything that Tadao, now 36 years old, had built was destroyed. Tadao returned to his hometown Uozu to rebuild his life. Tadao worked very hard and stayed curious, learning everything possible about production and finance.

Tadao's zippers were made by hand. It was only until the later years when he was able to automate production, that Tadao's company started becoming wildly successful. Tadao loved to aim high and take on big challenges. He didn't fear failure, and he learned from his experiences. He introduced the concept of 'The Cycle of Goodness' meaning coming up with new things to do good for others so that everyone prospers and the business grows when people are able to buy more.

The original zipper, however, was invented by an American inventor Whitcomb L. Judson. On August 29, 1893, Whitcomb was granted a patent for a 'clasp locker or unlocker for shoes'. The zipper itself falls in the category of fasteners, something that holds things together. Whitcomb was unsuccessful in popularizing his fastener. Sadly, when he died he didn't know how successful his invention would become. In 1917, a few years after Whitcomb died, a Swedish-American inventor Gideon Sundback improved the clasp and another patent was granted for his 'Separable Fastener'. It was only in 1923, that the B.F. Goodrich company gave the clasp (or fastener) its new onomatopoeic name, 'zipper'. An onomatopoeia mimics the sound of the thing that it describes. The fasteners after all make a 'zipping' sound. The zipper became immensely popular. It was used on the space suits of astronauts. Zippers have had a big impact on the fashion industry. They are so critical that if a zipper is bad, people simply can't use that pair of jeans or handbag. Each year, the world spends about \$20 billion on zippers.



The zipper seems to be simple in its components — the elements that hold on to each other, a slider that brings the elements together and a tape that keeps them in place. However, making zippers involves precision engineering. Even though he was not the inventor of the zipper, Tadao Yoshida's company designed a zipper making machine in the 1960s, which was recognized as a part of Japan's 'Mechanical Engineering Heritage' by the Japan Society of Mechanical Engineers.



The zipper hasn't changed much over the years until the MagZip, a magnetic zipper was invented in 2009. Tadao Yoshida (1908 - 1993) built a company that became the world's largest zipper manufacturer. His company's name, 'Yoshida Kōgyō Kabushiki geisha' (YKK) loosely translates as Yoshida Incorporated, a type of company defined under the Companies Act of Japan. If you ever see 'YKK' embossed on a zipper, that is a part of Japan's proud mechanical engineering heritage and the result of the grit and determination of a poor but curious kid from a small village in Japan.



Quiz your audience.

*This performance task is mainly for the younger members of AlligatorZone®.
(Your audience could be a family member, a classmate, a teacher or an observer).*



How many years ago did The B.F. Goodrich company coin the onomatopoeic name for the separable fastener — the zipper? (Don't use a calculator)

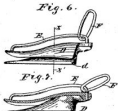
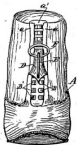
What is an onomatopoeia? Can you think of an example of an onomatopoeic word besides 'zipper'?

What is the brand name of the largest zipper manufacturer in the world?

How many times did Tadao Yoshida lose everything and had to start over?



Next?



Continue to the next page for participating in an exploration, as part of the premium AlligatorZone plan or go online to our learning community and share your thoughts.



AlligatorZone[®] Exploration

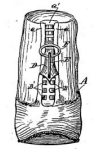
*Note down your responses, start or join a discussion in our learners' online community.
(This performance task is for older students and life-long learners at AlligatorZone.)*



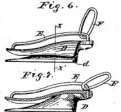
- 1) Observe a zipper and try to understand how it works.
- 2) Zippers can cause injury if one's skin gets caught in it. If you were to put a note of caution on a zipper, where would you put it, and what would it say?
- 3) Zippers sometimes malfunction. Think of whether a broken zipper can be replaced.
- 4) Sometimes, zippers get stuck. If you had the opportunity to redesign a zipper, how would you make it easier to get a zipper to come unstuck and start working properly again.
- 5) What are the best uses of zippers that you have seen, and where else do you think a zipper would be useful.
- 6) The zipper is a fastener. What other kinds of fasteners have you observed?
- 7) Research the cost of a zipper. Can a zipper manufacturer get a higher price for the zipper where it's use is extremely important to people, such as in a purse that keeps one's belongings secure?



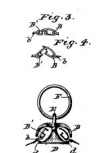
- 8) Think of how to improve the existing zipper.



- 9) How can a zipper be made easier to use by the differently abled? Research the MagZip. Think if it can be used by the elderly who have arthritis.



- 10) Summarize your findings and observations, and post them on AlligatorZone's online learning platform. Share your findings and learn collaboratively with our online community of life-long learners. Visit AlligatorZone.org for more.



Not yet a premium member of AlligatorZone[®].
Visit our website <https://alligatorzone.org>



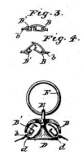
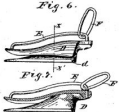
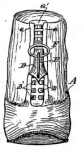
Tips for a Parent, Teacher or a Mentor

(For mentors and coaches using AlligatorZone's Premium Plans)



Here are time-tested tips for mentors who may want to steer the learning at home or in class.

- 1) **Keep it simple.** If the suggested activity calls for going to a specific location, try slipping the field activity into a routine trip to a store or a mall, and make it an 'oh-by-the-way-let-us-stop-and-look' kind of detour on an errand, rather than making a special trip for it. The idea is to remove any semblance of pressure to perform and focus purely on the joy of learning something new in a shared experience for a student and the teacher.
- 2) **Go Improv.** Avoid planning and scheduling in advance. Our goal with the activities is to help children make learning a life-long pursuit and a hobby, not a checklist item that will result in angst until it is completed and cleared.
 - Where an activity involves having a conversation with a stranger at a facility or a manager, consider making it a walk-in experience.
 - This improv-like approach, we believe, teaches the child to be comfortable with uncertain outcomes ("Sorry, the manager is out sick.") and improvise. They learn to play the hand they are dealt in the project (just like in life). They learn to find alternative sources of information and piece things together.
 - We believe it helps them learn how to focus on things they can control and not worry about things beyond their control.
 - We believe that it teaches them to find insights amid chaos and stay focused on the task at hand despite distractions.
- 4) **Learning, not shopping.** We strive to design activities that do not require making purchases. We strive not to make field activities specific to any particular brand. Use on-site observation to complete the learning with your student. Do not make a purchase for this purpose.
- 5) **Feel free to make a script, if it helps.** If you prefer to schedule a meeting in advance with a store manager or supervisor, prepare a script and encourage your student to be a part of the initial phone request while you stay on the call. Let the student own the process. In our recent summer workshop under the coach's supervision and guidance we had the 11-year old student conduct a market research. He told us later that it was the first time he had left a voice message and his first time on a business call. The sense of accomplishment and the confidence gained, were priceless.
- 6) **Let the child lead the conversation.** If the student is not yet ready to speak and start a discussion on topics in our activities, try making it a 3-way conversation and keep it casual, referring decision-making to the child ("What do you think?" or "Does that sound reasonable?") so everyone knows that the student is in charge of the discussion. After the first few times we often see kids lead and handle conversations with aplomb. Let there be no pressure on the student to produce a certain result. Let there be no pressure to use big words or business jargon. If a store owner or employee uses industry parlance or acronyms, seek clarification so the child knows there are no dumb questions.
- 7) **Going off-script is perfectly fine.** Allow the students to find alternative sources of information *under your supervision*, and let them piece things together for their learning. They might find something on TV or Netflix, Youtube, Pinterest or TikTok (if they already use those sites and apps) and be able to connect the dots to fresh insights for improved findings.



Last, but not the least, no matter what, keep it light-hearted and make it a spontaneous and shared experience for both, you and the student.



Sources

(These are the publicly available sources used to compile this story)

Sources:

Please visit AlligatorZone's online learning community to see links to the sources used to pull this story together.

You can also enjoy a curated collection of links to news reports, articles and videos for a deeper and wider understanding of the subject of the story.

