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Twelve ideas you should know about Nikola Tesla

Synesthesia is the ability to simultaneously perceive different sensations, that is, being able to smell a color or see a sound. Nikola Tesla was said to have had this, among other skills. He also spoke and wrote seven languages fluently: Hungarian, Latin, French, Czech, English, German and Italian, although he dreamed of a universal language to “facilitate mutual understanding”.

- 1** | A man who dedicated his life to understanding what electricity was. Nikola Tesla was born on July 10, 1856 in the city of Smiljan, a Serbian village of 400 inhabitants located in what was then the Austrian Empire, located in the mountainous region of western Lika, in present-day Croatia.
- 2** | His parents, Milutin Tesla and Djuka Mandic, came from western Serbia. Mr. Tesla was an Orthodox priest, and Mrs. Djuka, whose father was also an Orthodox priest, had a talent for creating household tools and memorizing epic poems.
- 3** | When he was three years old, little Nikola observed how a shower of sparks took place when he caressed the back of his cat, Macak. When he asked his father what that was, he was explained that this reaction was the same thing that happened to trees during a storm: electricity.
- 4** | Tesla was the fourth of five brothers. Dane, his older brother, died in a horse-riding accident when he was five years old. This fact had a great influence in him, because he believed he had been the cause of the accident. That same year, 1861, he went to school and studied German, arithmetic, and religion.
- 5** | In 1870, Tesla went to the Gospić Royal Gymnasium, in Karlovac, Croatia. There, his mathematics teacher, Martin Sekulic, was his great influence. Since he was a child he had a talent for mathematics, but his teachers were suspicious and gave him additional tests.
- 6** | Upon graduation in 1873, he returned to his hometown, where he became ill with **cholera**. He was in bed for nine months and close to death. Although his father wanted him to be a priest, he promised him that when he was cured he would fulfill his wish: to go to the best engineering school.

He had strange obsessions like that of the number three: everything he did was in groups of three or in multiples of three.

- 7** | In 1875, Nikola Tesla enrolled at the Polytechnic School of Graz, Austria, thanks to a scholarship. In his first year he never missed a class and got the best grades, but at the end of his second year, he lost his scholarship and became addicted to gambling.
- 8** | He studied engineering and physics, but did not graduate from university. In late 1878, he stopped communicating with his family to hide them the fact that he had given up his studies. Then he went to Maribor (today Slovenia), where he worked as a cartoonist.
- 9** | In 1880, he was sent by his uncles to Prague to study again at the university, but he was late for registration. So, he headed to Budapest to work for the brothers Ferenc and Tivadar Puskás, who developed the telephone exchange system. In 1882, he joined the *Continental Edison Company*, in France, to design and improve electrical equipment.
- 10** | In June 1884, he traveled to New York, where he was hired by the inventor of the phonograph and the electric bulb, Thomas Alba Edison. He designed motors and generators for Edison Machine Works, but he left the job because of his differences with Edison. He then devoted himself to experimental research and to his own inventions.
- 11** | His first design was the practical system for generating and transmitting alternating current in electric power systems (1888), which was exhibited at the *World's Columbian Exposition* in Chicago (1893) after George Westinghouse acquired its rights. Two years later, his design was used to install the Niagara Falls electrical power system.
- 12** | Tesla patented more than 700 inventions. He died of a heart attack on January 7, 1943, at the age of 86. He was alone in a hotel room in New York. His funeral was held in the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine and was attended by more than 2000 people who mourned the loss of the genius.

These twelve ideas facts about the life of **Nikola Tesla** resulted from an exhaustive search in different sources of public domain. The text was prepared, reviewed and approved by the Editorial Committee of **Ingenio** magazine.

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