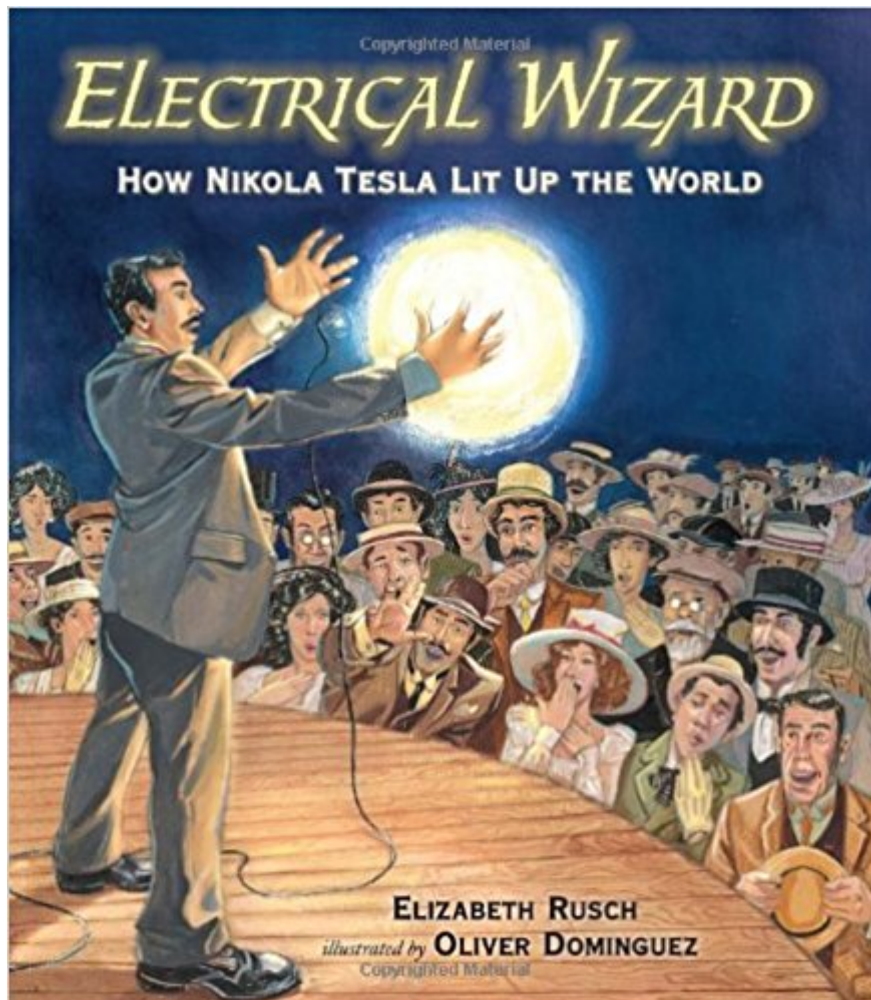




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# Electrical Wizard: How Nikola Tesla Lit Up The World



## Synopsis

Move over, Thomas Edison! Nikola Tesla takes the spotlight in a biography of the man who pioneered modern electrical engineering and changed the course of history. When a Serbian boy named Nikola Tesla was three, he stroked his cat and was enchanted by the electrical sparks. By the time he was a teenager, he had made a vow: Someday I will turn the power of Niagara Falls into electricity. Here is the story of the ambitious young man who brought life-changing ideas to America, despite the obstructive efforts of his hero-turned-rival, Thomas Edison. From using alternating current to light up the Chicago World's Fair to harnessing Niagara to electrify New York City and beyond, Nikola Tesla was a revolutionary ahead of his time. Remote controls, fluorescent lights, X-rays, speedometers, cell phones, even the radio—all resulted from Nikola Tesla's inventions. Established biographer Elizabeth Rusch sheds light on this extraordinary figure, while fine artist Oliver Dominguez brings his life and inventions to vivid color. Back matter includes additional information about Tesla, scientific notes and explanations, source notes, a bibliography, and suggestions for further reading.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 840L (What's this?)

Hardcover: 40 pages

Publisher: Candlewick; 8.11.2013 edition (September 10, 2013)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0763658553

ISBN-13: 978-0763658557

Product Dimensions: 10.1 x 0.4 x 11.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 26 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #284,165 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #24 in Books > Children's Books > Education & Reference > Science Studies > Electricity & Electronics #74 in Books > Children's Books > Science, Nature & How It Works > Inventions & Inventors #218 in Books > Children's Books > Biographies > Science & Technology

Age Range: 7 - 10 years

Grade Level: 2 - 5

## Customer Reviews

Gr 2-5—Although Edison's inventions are celebrated in many children's books, his rival,

Nikola Tesla, receives little attention. Rusch's picture-book biography starts to correct that imbalance. From childhood experiments through college studies, Tesla exhibited an interest in electricity. By the time he designed his alternating current (AC) system, he had moved from Eastern Europe to Paris but could find no investors to fund his projects. Convinced that Edison would recognize AC's value, Tesla came to America. Rather than welcome him, Edison set out to discredit AC because it threatened the direct current (DC) power stations he owned. Tesla's breakthrough came when Westinghouse, which used his inventions, won the bid to supply electricity to the Chicago World's Fair. That success was followed by Tesla's achievements in harnessing power generated by Niagara Falls to supply electricity for New York cities. Dramatic incidents such as Tesla's lighting a bulb with his hand are explained in scientific notes at the end. Diagrams and text clarify how AC and DC work, and Rusch stresses the dangers of experimenting with electricity. She provides source notes for quotations and offers detailed explanations of the Tesla-Edison rivalry and of other Tesla inventions. Dominguez's gouache and acrylic illustrations include impressive panoramas of the World's Fair and Niagara Falls, but the people lack animation. A more serious problem is the failure to provide historical context. There are no dates in the text itself, and there is no time line. Despite this oversight, most libraries should consider purchasing the book for its clear biographical details reinforced by scientific explanations. Students might compare Rusch's presentation with one or more books about Edison.

—Kathy Piehl, Minnesota State University, Mankato

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Thomas Edison's name may be better known, but as the man who made alternating current a practical means of delivering electrical power, Tesla has had a far greater influence on our world. Rusch highlights the Serbian-born inventor's lifelong fascination with electricity as she traces his training, bitter rivalry with Edison (whose attempts to market direct current as the "safer" choice ultimately failed), and the spectacular triumph wiring the 1893 Chicago World's Fair. Along with lucid explanations of AC's advantages over DC, Rusch closes with an analysis of Tesla's significance, plus simplified descriptions of his best-known demonstrations and devices—prefaced by a cogent, strongly worded warning about fiddling with electrical current. There's also a bountiful resource list. Less illuminating is the graphite and gouache art, which has lightning striking low spots rather than higher ones and shows Tesla arriving in New York as the Brooklyn Bridge was being built (he actually arrived a year after it opened). Still, this may be the first time readers have met Tesla, and this portrait gives them

a solid appreciation for his talents and achievements. Ed: needs cataloging. Grades 3-5. --John Peters

This is a wonderful artistic book illustrating the achievements of one of history's greatest scientific geniuses, Nikola Tesla, who gave the world alternating electricity (AC) and was the inventor of AC generators and motors that make modern life possible as we know it. His ideas included lasers and many other eventual technical achievements that were not within reach of the technology of his time. We owe our modern life to this savant, a master of electrical insight, imagination, and design.

Electrical Wizard is a good, fun illustrated novel to start young people on their path of discovery, to get Edison out of history books and name the true scientific genius who is responsible for what was the 20th century: Nikola Tesla. I gave four stars because the illustrations did not live up to my expectations.

My eight-year-old daughter had no problems reading this book for her report. I had only to explain a few concepts like the differences between alternating and direct current so she better understood Tesla as an inventor and historical figure. Heck, I even learned some things too.

Great book but my 8 yr old read it in one evening. He must have liked because he wanted to try some of the experiments. I've hidden all the wire in the house.

Kid needed a biography to read for 4th grade - this fit the bill perfectly. Very nice illustration. Very good, child-appropriate overview of his life and accomplishments. I liked that they included pages in the back that explained the science in the back.

This book is a wonderful way to introduce children to Tesla. My 9 year old daughter found it interesting and really enjoyed the illustrations. Some of the vocabulary was a little challenging for her but all in all, she was able to understand the material presented within the book.

There are not many books for children about Nikola Tesla but this one is very well-written. It's written in storybook form as opposed to a more research-type book. I learned so much from it so I know my child did.

Super interesting and informational book about Tesla and his inventions, it's a large book almost like for kids but was still good

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