

## The big idea

Your best ideas can often come to you when you are trying something different or when you are away from home. That was what happened to Thomas Lipton. As a teenager, he helped out in his parents' small shop. He was given the responsibility of taking an empty wheelbarrow down to the quayside in Glasgow every Monday evening. There, Thomas's job was to fill up the wheelbarrow with supplies for the shop from the Irish boat.

The boat from Ireland is late most Mondays and this gives Thomas the opportunity to wander around the docks asking everyone he meets lots of questions: Where do you come from? What job do you do? Where is that ship going to?

It's at this time that Thomas develops what he called "a passion for ships and shipping and everything connected with the ocean." It should have been no big surprise, then, to his parents, Thomas and Frances, when their son announces that he has saved up enough for a voyage to America.

That same year, Thomas sets sail from Glasgow to New York on the Caledonia. On arrival, Thomas is offered work as a labourer on a tobacco plantation in the State of Virginia. This State saw some of the worst of the fighting in the American Civil War that had only ended the year before, in 1865.

Thomas doesn't stay long in Virginia. After a spell working on a rice plantation in the State of South Carolina, he returns to New York. It is here that Thomas creates another opportunity for himself: work in the grocery section of a large department store, owned by the Irishman Alexander Stewart. This grocery 'shop' is nothing like anything he has seen or experienced in Glasgow. It is so bright, clean and busy.

