



LOUIS BRAILLE

(1809–1852)

Louis was born in France in 1809, in a small house in the countryside, where his dad worked making saddles for horses. Louis loved watching him work. One day, he took down a tool and tried to copy what his dad was doing. The tool slipped and hit him in the face.

Louis became blind in both eyes.

He was sent to a school for the blind, where he proved that he was intelligent, but he got annoyed by how difficult things were for him.

Louis stayed on at the school after graduating, becoming a professor and working with blind children. He wanted to improve their lives and he wanted people who didn't have eyesight problems to stop talking to them as though they were stupid or slow.

'We do not need pity,' he said. 'We must be treated as equals. And communication is how this can be brought about.'

From a captain of the French army, Louis heard about something called night writing, which soldiers used to

send messages without speaking on the battlefield. It was a series of raised dots and dashes that you could feel with your fingers.

Louis had an idea.

Using the very same tool that had blinded him, Louis began making small dots in paper. He created the system we now call Braille. It was easy to write, easy to read and easy to use in books.

Braille is now used by blind people all over the world. Famous musicians have learned to read music using it. New books are published in it. And it's been put on shop tills, museum exhibits and traffic lights, so that blind people have the freedom to live their lives like everyone else.

