

Chapter 12

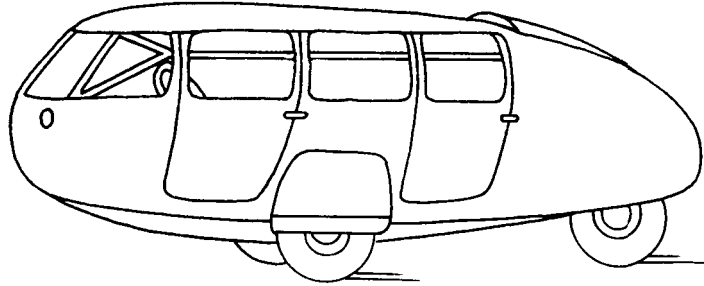
Use with Section 1

ENRICHMENT

● What is motion?

The Dymaxion Car

In 1933, the Dymaxion car, designed by inventor Buckminster Fuller, was able to reach an unheard of top speed of 120 mph (over 190 km/h). This speed was possible due to the light weight of the car. But, as you can see from the patent drawing shown here, the Dymaxion was no ordinary car. It had only three wheels—one in back that steered and two motorized drive wheels in front. Its streamlined, raindrop shape allowed it to have excellent fuel efficiency (about 48 km per gallon). Although this 11-seater vehicle was 6 m long, and not very practical for urban traffic, the rear wheel allowed it to be highly maneuverable—it could U-turn in less than its own length.



As promising as the design of the Dymaxion car seemed to be in 1933, a fatal crash while racing in 1935 caused the project to be discontinued. The accident had been blamed on the Dymaxion's steering, however it now appears that the other car may have been at fault.

Fuller continued over the years to refine what he had learned from the first Dymaxion car by making another version that was smaller and easier to steer. He also enhanced the high-speed stability by lengthening the wheelbase. Unfortunately, commercial interest for this new version did not exist at the time.

Answer the following questions, using complete sentences.

1. How was the Dymaxion car able to achieve such a high speed?

2. Do you think the 1933 Dymaxion car was a good idea? What do you like or not like about it?
