

History as we know it is about to get **BIG!**



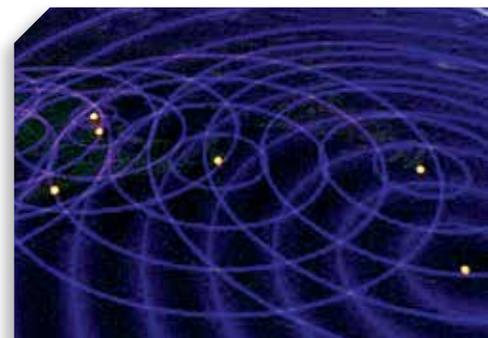
H2®, in collaboration with the Big History Project, is launching an exciting new series that turns history on its head, telling the story of the universe from the Big Bang through today. Narrated by the acclaimed actor Bryan Cranston, *Big History* crisscrosses through time and space to examine the surprising connections and unexpected twists that have resulted in our world today. The series consists of sixteen 30-minute episodes and a two-hour finale that weaves together a grand narrative describing the unifying links in the history of our universe. Through exploring popular items such as cell phones and airplanes and natural phenomena such as mountains and salt, each episode of the series looks at a topic from a “Big History” perspective.

Each episode in the *Big History* series starts with an iconic topic from the pages of traditional history (examples include the Great Pyramids, the American and French Revolutions, and Civil War battles) and then spins them into a surprising journey into other fields. The *Big History* series weaves together insights from many disciplines including astronomy, physics, biology and chemistry to reveal how humans have shaped our universe and, in turn, how we have shaped the natural world. Students will learn how a truly unique set of conditions have made it possible for humans to thrive on Earth and about the importance of safeguarding this distinctive planet we inhabit.

Curriculum Links

H2's *Big History* series is a great fit with a range of courses including history, science and technology, global studies and social studies. It is most appropriate for high school students. Visit www.history.com/shows/big-history to learn more about the *Big History* series and find additional classroom guides for each episode and premium online content. The series can be used as a companion to the Big History Project online course and curriculum.

The Big History Project is an off-shoot of the Big History academic movement, featuring free online courseware incorporating this innovative way of viewing the history of the world. This series introduces students to many key Big History concepts. Visit www.bighistoryproject.com to learn more about the Big History Project online course and curriculum.



Suggested Pre-Viewing Activity

Before watching an episode in the series, visit www.history.com/shows/big-history or www.bighistory.com and have students view one of the videos describing Big History. What does this concept mean?

Activities (See individual episode guides for more extensive activities.)

1. Big History Explorations. To introduce students to the themes of Big History, view one episode of the series. Have students search for a primary source related to the episode topic and present it to the larger class or group.

2. Connections. Ask students to write short essays or presentations about the three most interesting or surprising things they learned from a *Big History* episode and respond to the question: How did this Big History perspective change the way you think about this topic? Students can write essays responding to this question or discuss their answers with the larger class or group.

3. Little Big Histories. Visit www.history.com/shows/big-history to view related video clips and to find resources for exploring the *Big History* series and related topics. Have students view one of the short videos on the site and discuss the ways a Big History perspective differs from traditional history. Students can also create their own “Little Big Histories” as part of the Big History Project course. (Links to this online courseware are located throughout this guide.) Ask students to think about their own “Little Big History” project and think about a topic they would choose and how they would approach it. (Examples: Students could create a “Little Big History” about sneakers, a spice or kind of food they love, a piece of technology, etc.)

4. Big History Project Courseware. The best way to explore Big History is through the online course. Visit www.bighistoryproject.com to explore the Big History Project and learn about the free courseware. This comprehensive course has all the resources you’ll need to incorporate a Big History class into your school curriculum.

Big History Thresholds

One of the core concepts of Big History is the idea of thresholds of complexity. Thresholds are unique turning points in which conditions were “just right” for change and increased complexity. These “Goldilocks conditions” provided the right context for new organisms to develop and thrive. (Visit www.bighistoryproject.com to learn more about this concept and other Big History themes.)

What is one threshold moment in the *Big History* episode you watched?

What conditions made this turning point possible?

What were the outcomes of this change or development?

Related Websites

H2's Big History series: www.history.com/shows/big-history

Big History Project: <https://course.bighistoryproject.com/bhplive>

Professor David Christian's TED talk about Big History:
www.ted.com/talks/david_christian_big_history.html

The Gates Notes - Big History:
www.thegatesnotes.com/Big-History-Educator-landing-page

Related Books

NOTE: These books are recommended for educators and advanced student readers who may want to read selections from these books to further their understanding of the topics explored in this episode.

Christian, David. *This Fleeting World: A Short History of Humanity*. (Berkshire Publishing Group, 2007).

Christian, David, Cynthia Stokes-Brown and Craig Benjamin. *Big History: Between Nothing and Everything*. (McGraw-Hill, 2013).

Spier, Fred. *Big History and the Future of Humanity*. (Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

Stokes-Brown, Cynthia. *From the Big Bang to the Present*. (New Press, 2004).

About the Big History Project

Imagine exploring 13.7 billion years of history from the Big Bang to modernity. Big History tells the complete story, revealing common themes and patterns that help students better understand people, civilizations and our place in the universe. The Big History Project is a collaboration designed to bring Big History to life for today's students.

- Big History Project content and courseware is 100% free, open and available online at www.bighistoryproject.com.
- Educators can sign up at that website, create an account and start using the courseware, which is a great fit for middle and secondary schools.
- All training and preparation materials are available online, and the website supports all aspects of course management, including assessments.
- Educators can teach the entire course or choose to use selections of the courseware based on classroom objectives and environment.



Big History Project Online and Social Media:

Website: www.bighistoryproject.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/bighistoryproject

Twitter: twitter.com/BigHistoryPro