

HISTORY™ CLASSROOM PRESENTS

THE CENTURY: STARTING OVER

Reporter Peter Jennings hosts this important series that chronicles the events and experiences of America in the twentieth century, the century that Henry Luce dubbed “The American Century.” Using archival footage and interviews with historians, veterans, activists and every-day people, this documentary explores the social, political, cultural, and economic changes that have transformed this nation from a burgeoning, isolationist economic power to one of the world’s leaders. *The Century: America’s Time* would be useful for classes on American History, American Culture, Women’s History, Political Science, Civics, Science and Technology, Military History and Ethics. It is appropriate for middle school, high school and college.

STARTING OVER

In the aftermath of the turmoil of the 1960s and the disillusionment of Watergate, Americans turned to Jimmy Carter in an attempt to return to small-town values. But Carter’s inability to deal with the overwhelming social, economic and political problems paved the way for a new conservatism led by Ronald Reagan, and the jubilation of the 1976 Bicentennial Celebration gave way to the despair and embarrassment of the Iranian Hostage Crisis. This episode examines the mid and late 1970s and some of the major events of the era such as the energy crisis, racial unrest, the rise of the “Me Generation,” unemployment and inflation, and the problems with Iran.

OBJECTIVES

Students will analyze the effects of the twentieth century on American life, political institutions, economics, foreign policy and culture. They will also investigate how events in the twentieth century influenced America’s position as a world leader, and how global and domestic events created change, and sometimes turmoil, in America itself.

NATIONAL HISTORY STANDARDS

Starting Over fulfills the following National Standards for History for grades 5-12: Chronological thinking, historical comprehension, historical analysis and interpretation, historical research capabilities, historical issues-analysis and decision-making for Era 10.

VOCABULARY

ideals	reconciliation	prestige	obsolete
malaise	thwarted	rectitude	apathy
toxic	idealism	wane	escapism
vogue	galvanize	epitome	exaltation
unorthodox	adversaries	messiah	euphoria

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In 1976, America celebrated its 200th birthday. Why was the Bicentennial celebration so important to America? Why was it so necessary?
2. Why was America's prestige, nationally and internationally, at an all-time low?
3. The 1970s is known as the "me" decade. What prompted the individuality and self-absorption that earned the decade this title?
4. In 1976, Georgia governor and peanut farmer Jimmy Carter became president of the United States. What was the appeal of this unlikely presidential candidate?
5. The 1970s were a time of political apathy. What caused this political apathy and malaise? Why had the American voters lost confidence in their government and leaders?
6. America in the 1970s experienced a severe energy crisis. Discuss how this crisis affected the American economy and society.
7. In 1978, Dan White, a disgruntled city employee in San Francisco, murdered mayor George Moscone and openly gay city supervisor Harvey Milk. How did these murders help to advance the Gay Liberation Movement?
8. How did the disco scene of the 1970s reflect the political and social apathy of the era?
9. Iranian students held Americans hostage for over 400 days in the late 1970s. Why was Iran so anti-United States?
10. Ronald Reagan won the presidency in 1980 and became one of America's most popular presidents. What was the appeal of this former actor?

EXTENDED ACTIVITIES

1. Compare the popular music of the 1970s with the popular music of the 1960s. How does the music reflect the attitudes, political and social, of the decades?
2. Create a celebration poster for the Bicentennial.
3. Research the Iranian hostage crisis and create a narrative that illustrates the course of events.
4. Design a victory poster/medal for the 1980 U.S. hockey team.