

HISTORY™ CLASSROOM PRESENTS

THE CENTURY: AMERICA'S TIME: A NEW WORLD

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.

A NEW WORLD

As the 1970s gave way to the 1980s, Americans were ready for a more conservative leader and they found the answer to their quest in Ronald Reagan. Reagan's folksy ways and familiar face created an aura of trust and he became one of America's most popular presidents. But Reagan's homespun ways could not forestall the economic crises of the 1980s and the widening economic divide between the haves and the have-nots. This episode examines some of the major events of the 1980s including the recession, aids, Wall Street, MTV, terrorism, televangelism and the fall of communism.

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

A New World 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

vengeance	austere	superimpose	cataclysmic
eerie	mire	infectious	coup
decimated	acronym	cornucopia	stagnation
resilience	emblematic	magnitude	glasnost

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does Peter Jennings call the 1980s “a decade of revolution and renewal?”
2. What was unique about the 1980s? How did this decade differ from the 1970s or the 1990s?
3. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall was dedicated in 1982 amidst controversy and protest. Why was the “Wall” so controversial? How has the Wall helped America come to terms with the Vietnam War?
4. Why do people leave momentos and trinkets at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall?
5. America elected Ronald Reagan to the presidency in 1980. What was the appeal of this man? Why was Reagan one of the most popular presidents of the twentieth century?
6. A devastating new drug, crack cocaine, made its appearance in the 1980s. What were the effects of this drug, particularly in urban areas?
7. What were the principles of Reaganomics? Did these economic policies work?
8. Discuss the impact of personal computers in the 1980s on American life and culture.
9. In 1986, the space shuttle *Challenger* exploding killing the entire crew and a New Hampshire teacher, Christa McAuliffe. What was the impact of this terrible tragedy?
10. Television and religion blended together in the 1980s with the rise of televangelism. What was the appeal of televangelism? What happened to some of the leading televangelists of the decade?
11. Discuss the discovery and evolution of the AIDS epidemic in America. How did this disease change American social habits?

EXTENDED ACTIVITIES

1. Research the history of the Berlin Wall. How was the wall the most visible symbol of the divisions between the eastern and western worlds?
2. Design a campaign poster for Ronald Reagan.
3. Read George Orwell’s *1984*. What was Orwell trying to say in this novel? Who or what was he critiquing? Did any of his predictions come true?