

HISTORY™ CLASSROOM PRESENTS

THE CENTURY: AMERICA'S TIME SHELL SHOCK

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.

SHELL SHOCK

From the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo in June of 1914 to Armistice Day in November of 1918, the world was embroiled in the First World War. World War I not only shaped much of the events of the twentieth century but also was truly unique since it was the first “mechanized” war. This episode documents the development of the war and American foreign policy regarding both war and peace.

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

Shell Shock 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 7.

VOCABULARY

capsize	nationalist	pretext	disillusionment
optimism	ferocious	appalling	armistice
queue	attrition	sniper	calamity
quagmire	stalemate	futility	chaos

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is this episode called *Shell Shock*? What does the term mean? When and how did it come into use?
2. A German U-boat sank the *Lusitania* off the Irish Coast. Despite the knowledge of a war waging in the Atlantic, passengers chose to sail in these waters. Why did the passengers of the *Lusitania* have a false sense of security?
3. Discuss some of the causes of World War I.
4. Why was World War I different from all previous wars? How was this war truly a product of the new century?
5. What was the “massacre of the innocents?” Why did this event bear this name?
6. The automobile is one of the most influential machines of the twentieth century. How did the automobile change American life in the early years of the century?
7. How did propaganda shape American views of World War I? How has propaganda shaped American views and mores during other twentieth century events?
8. The years 1915-1940 saw the great African-American migration, when millions of African-Americans migrated from the South to the North. How did World War II help foster this massive migration? How did this migration affect life in both the South and the North?
9. What is a “war of attrition?” Why was World War I a war of attrition?
10. Discuss the futility of the Battle of the Somme.
11. What were some of the causes of the Russian Revolution? What were the ramifications of this revolution for world events in the twentieth century?

EXTENDED ACTIVITIES

1. Create a timeline of the events of World War I.
2. Imagine that you are a World War I soldier. Write a diary or journal that tells of your feelings and experiences.
3. Read Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*. Discuss how Remarque's novel reflected the waste and futility of World War I.