

# THE HISTORY CHANNEL CLASSROOM STUDY GUIDES

## Modern Marvels

### Polio Vaccine

The discovery of the polio vaccine ended one of the most traumatic epidemics of the twentieth century. Polio, strangely a disease of progress, devastated the lives of millions, especially children. Those who survived the scourge were left disabled; the most famous was Franklin D. Roosevelt, President of the United States. In the 1950s, an unassuming scientist, Jonas Salk, discovered that a killed strain of the virus provided immunity to the dreaded disease.

*Polio Vaccine* would be useful for classes on American History, American Culture and Science. It is appropriate for middle school and high school.

- [alternate](#)
- [apprehension](#)
- [coffers](#)
- [diagnosis](#)
- [diligent](#)
- [enamored](#)
- [eradicate](#)
- [feces](#)
- [futility](#)
- [immunization](#)
- [ingenuity](#)
- [mentor](#)
- [mollify](#)
- [optimum](#)
- [ostensibly](#)
- [paralysis](#)
- [patrician](#)
- [poignant](#)
- [tedious](#)
- [vanquish](#)

### Discussion Questions

1. Poliomyelitis was one of the most dreaded diseases of the twentieth century. What made this disease so insidious?
2. Technology and the provisions for the disabled were very different in the first half of the century than they are today. How were families and institutions ill equipped to deal with the special needs of polio victims?
3. What is an epidemic? Why are epidemics more widespread in the twentieth century than in any other time in history?
4. What is a virus? How is a virus different from bacteria?
5. What are the origins of the word vaccination?
6. Franklin Delano Roosevelt was polio's most famous victim. How did FDR's high visibility help to fight the dreaded disease?
7. What are the origins of the March of Dimes?
8. How was Jonas Salk able to develop the polio vaccine?
9. Jonas Salk inoculated himself and his family with the new vaccine before he inoculated anyone else. Why did he do this?
10. Discuss some of the logistic challenges of the polio trials.

### **Extended Activities**

1. Write an essay on the role of disease as a historical agent.
2. Create a chart or poster of diseases that impacted the twentieth century.