

# THE HISTORY CHANNEL CLASSROOM STUDY GUIDES

## Modern Marvels

### Roller Coasters: The Search for the Ultimate Thrill Ride

This episode of *Modern Marvels* examines the history of the of one of America's favorite pastimes-riding the rollercoaster. Reaching its zenith in the 20th century, the rollercoaster is the thrill seeking embodiment of the Industrial Revolution and technology. As rollercoaster engineers and designers search for new heights, twists and turns to built, American thrill seekers eagerly wait on line to experience the fastest, scariest and most exciting roller coasters.

*Roller Coasters: The Search for the Ultimate Thrill Ride* would be useful for classes on American History, European History, The History of Science and Technology, and Cultural History. It is appropriate for middle school and high school. But remember, fasten your seat belts!

- aesthetics
- affable
- antiquated
- aromatic
- calliope
- carte blanc
- coherent
- concessions
- deluge
- dormant
- endeavor
- exacerbated
- exhilarating
- exploited
- obsolete
- pastoral
- patron
- precursor
- predecessors
- premier
- quintessential
- relegated
- solidify
- tedious

### Discussion Questions

1. Roller coasters today are marvels of modern technology. How have the advances in technology improved the rollercoaster in the 20th century?
2. The roller coaster is called "the undisputed king of the park." Why is the rollercoaster the "king of the park?" Are there any other rides or amusements that could vie for this title?
3. Roller coasters provide the means to satisfy the thrill seeker. Why do people seek thrills? What is it about being frightened, in a controlled environment, that appeals to people? What other ways do people seek thrills?
4. Amusement parks are a part of the American landscape. Almost everyone has been to an amusement park at one time or another. Why were these parks originally built, and by whom?

5. How are amusement parks a product of the Industrial Revolution?
6. Discuss why we could name the 20th century the "century of motion?"
7. Why were the 1920s considered the "golden age of roller coasters?" What is it about that era or decade that made rollercoaster riding so prominent?
8. Why did the 1930s put an end to the "golden age of roller coasters" of the 1920s?
9. Roller coasters, and amusement parks in general, experienced a revival of popularity in the 1950s. Why? What was the role of Walt Disney in this surge of popularity?
10. Are we experiencing a new "golden age of roller coasters" today? Explain.

### **Extended Activities**

1. Write an essay describing the experience of riding your favorite rollercoaster. What makes this particular rollercoaster your favorite? How would you improve or change the ride?
2. Design the ultimate rollercoaster. How would you make t