

THE HISTORY CHANNEL CLASSROOM STUDY GUIDES

Modern Marvels

The Television: Window to the World

This episode of Modern Marvels presents the story of the development of television and its impact on humankind. From its public marketing in the 1940s to the present day, television can be listed as one of the most profound, if not the most profound, influences on human history. Television has affected every aspect of our lives including history, science, politics, culture and social mores. It is impossible to imagine a world without television, and most of us take for granted the way television has shaped and defined our society, and our lives.

The Television: Window to the World would be useful for classes on American History, World History, Political Science, Science, The History of Science and Technology, and Cultural Studies. It is appropriate for middle school and high school.

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Discussion Questions

1. Television changed the way that Americans learned about news and events. Events are now transmitted to your television at the moment they are happening. Discuss how television has changed American history and culture because of its speed.
2. The meeting between Guglielmo Marconi and David Sarnoff was an accident of fate. What is the role of fate in history? What other "accidents of fate" in history have produced great results?
3. The competition between television manufacturers helped to produce better, less expensive television sets for consumers. Compare the competition between television manufacturers during the 1940s and 1950s with computer companies today.

4. You have had access to television all your life. Imagine how different your life would be without television. How has television influenced your life?
5. What were the technical and logistical problems with the development of television?
6. Television was introduced to the mass public at the 1939 World's Fair. What other "marvels" were unveiled at the fair?
7. The inventors of television were laughed at and ridiculed. What other inventors of great machines have been laughed at?
8. Some historians feel that the televising of the 1960 presidential campaign debates changed the course of history. What is the role of television in our political system?
9. How have advertisers used television to their benefit?

Extended Activities

1. Interview your grandparents, or any older person who was born before television was invented or mass marketed. What was their life like before television? How did television change their life? What was their reaction and thoughts when they saw a television for the first time?
2. Create a mobile of the characters from your favorite television show. Why do you like this show? What makes the characters appealing?