

## THE HISTORY CHANNEL CLASSROOM STUDY GUIDES

### Modern Marvels

#### The Telephone

This episode of *Modern Marvels* chronicles the invention and development of the telephone. Probably the greatest invention of modern times, the telephone made possible instant communication that laid the groundwork for other momentous inventions such as the television and the computer. *The Telephone* is the story of the evolution of the telephone from Alexander Graham Bell's idea to the world-wide communication systems of today.

This program would be useful for classes on American History, History of Science and Technology, Communications, and American Culture. It is appropriate for middle school and high school.

- apparatus
- benefactor
- cadaver
- caveat
- contemporaries
- culminated
- enthralled
- entrepreneurial
- imminent
- ingenuity
- litigious
- nemesis
- procrastinated
- quantum leap
- respite
- skepticism
- subsidiary
- venue
- virtuoso
- virulent

#### Discussion Questions

1. How did the invention of the telephone revolutionize the world? How would the world be different today if the telephone was never invented?
2. The patent for the telephone is considered the most valuable patent in history. Why?
3. It is hard to imagine life without the telephone, but throughout most of history there was no such device. How did people communicate and send important messages before the telephone?
4. The telephone was the result of Alexander Graham Bell's experiments to improve the telegraph. What were some of the limitations of the telegraph that the telephone addressed?
5. Alexander Graham Bell's mother was almost completely deaf. How did her deafness inspire Bell?
6. How did Bell's love of music aid him in his inventions, particularly the telephone?
7. Alexander Graham Bell had a tendency to become distracted. How was this both a blessing and a curse to his inventions?
8. What role did luck play in Alexander Graham Bell's inventions?

9. Alexander Graham Bell's father-in-law, Gardner Hubbard, was a successful and shrewd businessman. How did Hubbard's business sense help establish the Bell Telephone Company?
10. Working as a telephone operator was one of the few areas of employment for women in the early part of the century. But the first telephone operators were young boys. Why did the Bell Telephone Company switch to women? Why were women considered to be the best choice for the job?

### **Extended Activities**

1. Create a timeline that illustrates the development and evolution of the telephone from its beginnings to the communication systems of today.
2. Try to live without the telephone, and the inventions it made possible, for one day. This means no telephone, television, radio or computer. Write an essay describing your experience and how you managed without the communication systems you are accustomed to using.