

THE HISTORY CHANNEL CLASSROOM STUDY GUIDES

Modern Marvels

Battlefield Medicine

For as long as men have been fighting wars, they have been practicing the art of battlefield medicine. As technological progress made war and killing more efficient and horrific, it also made battlefield medicine more efficient. This episode of *Modern Marvels* examines the history of the medical techniques of war. It explores how both killing and healing progressed in tandem, and the paradox of war being the facilitator of medical advancements and breakthroughs. *Battlefield Medicine* would be useful for classes on World History, American History, The History of Science and Technology, and Military History. It is appropriate for middle school and high school.

OBJECTIVES

Students will examine the relationship between war and medicine. They will also explore how technology relates to advances in both healing and killing. By analyzing these relationships, students will gain an understanding of the moral and ethical implications of technology.

NATIONAL HISTORY STANDARDS

Battlefield Medicine fulfills the following National Standards for History for grades 5-12: chronological thinking, historical comprehension, historical analysis and interpretations, and historical research capabilities for United States History eras 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10; World History eras 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10.

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Discussion Questions

1. Medics have been called "an army within an army." Explain the meaning of this statement.
2. Army medicine is a paradox. What is a paradox? Why is army medicine a paradox? Can you think of another example of a paradox?
3. Discuss the paradox of war and battlefield or army medicine. What are some of the advances made in medicine that resulted from war?
4. Technology creates more efficient weapons and more effective medical treatments. Discuss both the horrors and benefits of technology. Are there any moral or ethical implications in the development and use of technology? If so, should technology be regulated? How, and by whom?
5. In 1848 French army Captain Claude E. Minié perfected a rifled expanding bullet that soldiers used in the American Civil War. Discuss the problems army surgeons faced because of these destructive "Minié balls."
6. Soldiers died of their wounds at an alarming rate because of infection. Surgeons unwittingly contributed to this because of the unsanitary conditions of their surgical tools and areas. This changed by World War I because of the germ

theory of disease. What is the germ theory of disease? How did this save untold numbers of lives in subsequent wars?

7. Discuss how World War I brought modern medicine to the battlefield.
8. World War I was a different type of warfare than ever before. Soldiers fought, and lived in trenches. How did trench warfare produce additional casualties?
9. One of the most horrific weapons of World War I was poison gas. Discuss the characteristics of this weapon.
10. Many soldiers in World War I experienced "shell shock." In World War II, they experienced "battle fatigue," and in Vietnam it was "post-traumatic stress disorder." These are all synonyms for the same disorders. What are these syndromes? How do they affect soldiers?
11. Discuss the irony of Charles Drew's contributions in saving the lives of wounded soldiers.
12. Discuss the role of the helicopter in battlefield medicine.
13. What do you think is the future of battlefield medicine?

Extended Activities

1. Create a timeline that illustrates the major wars and advancements in medicine in the 20th century.
2. Imagine that you are an army surgeon, nurse or medic. Write a letter home in which you tell your friends/family of your wartime experience.

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