

THE HISTORY CHANNEL CLASSROOM STUDY GUIDES

Modern Marvels: Firefighting!

Fire—it can be humankind’s best friend or worst enemy. *Firefighting* examines the history of fire and firefighting, and explores contemporary trends and technological advancements in state-of-the-art firefighting. It also salutes the bravest of the brave—firefighters. Whether battling urban blazes that threaten lives and property or forest fires that can consume acres of woodlands, firefighters put their lives on the line each time they go to work. *Firefighting* would be useful for classes on American history, Public History, American Culture and Science and Technology. It is appropriate for middle school and high school.

Extreme Conditions

This episode of *Firefighting* examines the firefighters who battle extreme blazes under adverse conditions. These fires, such as oil well fires and forest fires, are even more difficult to fight and require a team of highly skilled and trained firefighters who are experts in their dangerous fields.

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- [aviation](#)
- [catastrophe](#)
- [concussion](#)
- [debris](#)
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- [erratically](#)
- [incendiary](#)
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- [plague](#)
- [potent](#)
- [rig](#)
- [woodlands](#)

Discussion Questions

1. An oil fire is referred to as “Mother Nature out of control.” What does this phrase mean? Why does it apply to an oil fire?
2. Firefighters say that you need to respect an oil fire. What do they mean by respect? How can they “respect” a fire? What other forces or objects do we need to “respect?”
3. What is a “blow out?” What are the dangers posed by a “blow out?”
4. Define and describe Myron McKinley’s 3-step procedure for stopping oil well fires.
5. During the conflict in the Persian Gulf, Saddam Hussein set fire to the oil wells in the region. It took firefighters months to extinguish these fires. Why did it take so long for firefighters to put out these fires? How did the firefighting exhibit a spirit of international cooperation?
6. How has fire shaped the American landscape?
7. Smoke jumpers are highly skilled firefighters who battle woodland blazes. How do smoke jumpers prevent a fire from spreading?
8. How do smoke jumpers fight fire with fire?

9. Discuss how fire can be used as a weapon of war. How has fire been used differently in various wars?
10. What is the “deadly irony of the space age?”

Extended Activities

1. Create a poster that illustrates the various ways in which fire has been employed as a weapon of war.
2. Imagine that you are a smoke jumper fighting the Yellowstone fires of 1988. Create a diary or a journal that tells of your experiences.