

THE HISTORY CHANNEL CLASSROOM STUDY GUIDES

Modern Marvels

Grand Coulee Dam

The completion of the Grand Coulee Dam proved America's industrial might could overcome any obstacle, even Mother Nature. But the magnitude of the project brought on unique problems in need of inventive solutions. When bedrock was exposed, a huge volume of clay began creeping forward, threatening to swallow up the foundation. After much frantic deliberation, engineers froze the clay and saved the day. Here is the uncommon history of this imposing structure, and the astonishment it still evokes today. *The Grand Coulee Dam* would be useful for classes on American History, American Culture, Science and Technology, Labor History and Geography. It is appropriate for middle school and high school.

OBJECTIVES

Students will learn the political, economic and social causation and ramifications of the Grand Coulee Dam. They will understand the role of public works projects in American society and culture, as well as the role of the government in regulating sources, supplies and distribution of power supplies.

NATIONAL STANDARDS

The Grand Coulee Dam fulfills the following National Standards for History for grades 5-12: Chronological thinking, historical comprehension, historical analysis and interpretation, historical research capabilities, historical issues-analysis and decision-making for era 8.

- [beguile](#)
- [calamity](#)
- [catalyst](#)
- [commissary](#)
- [diversion](#)
- [excavate](#)
- [gorge](#)
- [incidentals](#)
- [infrastructure](#)
- [labyrinth](#)
- [petulant](#)
- [volatile](#)

Discussion Questions

1. The Grand Coulee dam is one of the largest public works ever undertaken. Where is the dam located? Why did this region need the dam?
2. The dam is not only a functional part of infrastructure, but also a symbolic structure. How does the dam symbolize the human desire to harness the power of nature?
3. How is the Grand Coulee both a dam and a monument at the same time?
4. There were three specific goals in building the dam. What were they? Was each of these goals met?
5. Not everyone supported the building of the dam. Why did some people object the construction of the dam
6. The building of the Grand Coulee Dam took place during the Great Depression. What was the Great Depression? What effect did the Great Depression have on American History?

7. The Bonus March occurred in the early years of the Great Depression. What was the Bonus March? How did it end?
8. How were the Great Depression and the Grand Coulee dam intertwined?
9. President Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected in 1932 as the Great Depression devastated the American economy. What was Roosevelt's New Deal? How did the New Deal try to cope with the social and economic disaster of the Great Depression?
10. What was the Blue Eagle? What did it symbolize?
11. Each dam is unique in its design and execution. What determines the design of a dam? What determined the design of the Grand Coulee Dam?
12. Discuss some of the difficulties engineers and workers faced in the construction of the dam.
13. What is the legacy of the Grand Coulee Dam?

Extended Activities

1. Research the music of Woody Guthrie. What was the political significance of his music? What is the historic significance of his music?
2. On a map of North America, trace the route of the Columbia River and mark the site of the Grand Coulee Dam.
3. Research the National Recovery Act (NRA) of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal and write an essay on the course and demise of the act.