

THE HISTORY CHANNEL CLASSROOM STUDY GUIDES

Modern Marvels

Mount Rushmore

Towering over the Black Hills of South Dakota, Mount Rushmore was the vision of Gutzon Borglum, a combative and fiercely talented sculptor. To elicit public support for his dream, Borglum whipped American patriotism into a frenzy. Over the course of fifteen years, 350 men poured their sweat into Borglum's vision, using drills and explosives to chisel Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, and Roosevelt into the massive granite cliff. Here is the controversial history of this unorthodox masterpiece, including the remarkable design specifications, and the awe it still inspires today.

- [audacity](#)
- [bombastic](#)
- [coda](#)
- [contentious](#)
- [eloquent](#)
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- [tantamount](#)
- [vigorous](#)
- [visionaries](#)

Discussion Questions

1. Work on Mount Rushmore began in the 1920s, an era known as “the roaring twenties.” Why did the twenties “roar?” What characteristics of this decade earned it this moniker?
2. What are the “needles” of the Black Hills?
3. Why did Gutzon Borglum's patrons desire to build an enormous monument like Mount Rushmore?
4. Mount Rushmore took over fifteen years to complete just the figures (the tunnel and archives were never completed). Discuss some of the obstacles the artist and his men faced in the execution of the monument.
5. The finished product looked quite different from Borglum's original design. Discuss the evolution of the design and why the design underwent these changes.
6. Working on Mount Rushmore was a dangerous job in which workers were exposed to the elements. Why was this job attractive to workers despite the dangers and discomfort?
7. How was this project funded?
8. The original design called for an entablature that would provide a text for the monument. Why was this idea abandoned?

Extended Activities

1. Using the medium of your choice, create your own Mount Rushmore that celebrates the lives and achievements of four of your heroes.
2. Imagine that you are an alien in the future and the United States no longer exists. Write a report home to your superior speculating on Mount Rushmore and what was its purpose and symbolism.