HISTORY™ CLASSROOM PRESENTS

THE CENTURY: AMERICA’S TIME
OVER THE EDGE

Reporter Peter Jennings hosts this important series that chronicles the events and experiences of America in the twentieth century, the century that Henry Luce dubbed “The American Century.” Using archival footage and interviews with historians, veterans, activists and every-day people, this documentary explores the social, political, cultural, and economic changes that have transformed this nation from a burgeoning, isolationist economic power to one of the world’s leaders. The Century: America’s Time would be useful for classes on American History, American Culture, Women’s History, Political Science, Civics, Science and Technology, Military History and Ethics. It is appropriate for middle school, high school and college.

OVER THE EDGE

This episode documents the years that led up to the beginning of World War II. From burning books to Kristallnacht, this episode examines the anti-Semitism that eventually dominated German thinking. It also analyses the new ways in which leaders were able to use the technology of the twentieth century, such as the media for propaganda purposes and offers a domestic view to the European conflict, and how and where Americans received their information.

OBJECTIVES

Students will analyze the effects of the twentieth century on American life, political institutions, economics, foreign policy and culture. They will also investigate how events in the twentieth century influenced America’s position as a world leader, and how global and domestic events created change, and sometimes turmoil, in America itself.

NATIONAL HISTORY STANDARDS

Over the Edge 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.

VOCABULARY

Magnetic  Articulate  Ideology  Blitzkrieg
Citizenry  Lectern  Sinister  Stronghold
Subversive  Insulate  isolationism  Beleaguered

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
1. Germany hosted the 1936 Summer Olympics. How did Hitler use the 1936 Olympics to promote his Nazi Party?

2. American Jesse Owens’ stunning victory in the 100-meter race angered Adolph Hitler. How did Owens’ victory shatter the Nazi propaganda about Aryan supremacy?

3. Franklin Delano Roosevelt was a master of the media. How did he use the media to do battle in the Great Depression? How did he use the media to rally support during World War II?

4. Discuss the impact of radio on American history and American culture in the twentieth century.

5. How did Adolph Hitler use propaganda and the media to achieve his desired goals?

6. In the late 1930s, the Nazi Party in Germany burned books. Why did they do this? How can books be considered such a threat that some might find it necessary to burn them?

7. What were the Nuremberg Laws? How did they affect the Jewish population of Germany and German-occupied states?

8. World War II was not the first time anti-Semitism reared its ugly head. Discuss the history of anti-Semitism in Europe.

9. England and its Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, seemed to appease Hitler. Why did they choose this passive strategy?

10. What was Kristallnacht? What prompted this show of Nazi aggression?

11. Why did the United States refuse to let the St. Louis dock in the United States and allow its passengers to emigrate?

EXTENDED ACTIVITIES

1. Research Life magazine published during the years of the Great Depression and illustrate how it gave Americans a pictorial account of the depression.

2. Imagine that you are a Jew in Hitler’s Germany. Keep a diary or journal that tells of your emotions and experiences.

3. Create a poster advertising the historic boxing match between American Joe Louis and German Max Schmelling.