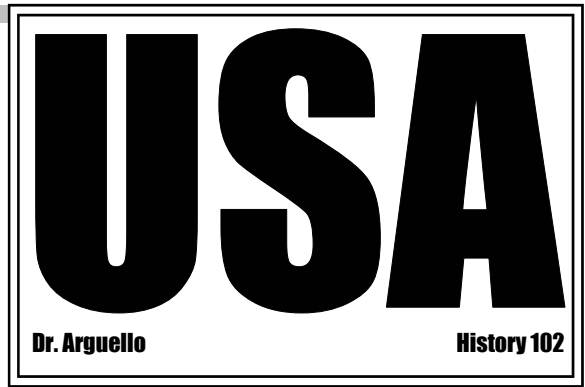


Progressives & American Expansion

A Man, A Plan, A Canal, Panama

Study Guide



After viewing the film "A Man, A Plan, A Canal, Panama", be prepared to write a 2 page essay describing how this and other engineering projects are representative of the Progressive Age in American History. This essay will be a part of your report for the final exam.



Viewing Goals

1. Explain the reasons why the Panama Canal was dug
2. Appreciate the engineering skills necessary and the demands of the project, and describe some of the technical problems faced by the engineers and builders
3. Name the countries involved in the project and describe their contributions
4. Characterize the climate and terrain of the isthmus, and describe the importance of public health developments and sanitation for the successful completion of the project
5. List several reasons why the French attempt to build the canal failed
6. Describe the major foreign policy decisions made by the United States regarding the canal zone and the consequences of these decisions
7. Describe the significance of the following actors in this drama:

Count Ferdinand de Lesseps
President Theodore Roosevelt
Philippe Bunau-Varilla

Chief engineer John F. Stevens
Dr. William Gorgas
Col. George Washington Goethals



A copy of this film is on reserve in the Learning Resource Center of the Palomar College Library, 1st floor.

A Man, A Plan, A Canal, Panama



Questions to Consider

1. The French and Americans had very different approaches to the task of building the canal. Compare these approaches, including the canal's design and financing, the ways the engineers attempted to solve technical problems, and the attitudes of project leaders towards their workers.
2. In the program, narrator David McCullough says, "The French had all the will in the world, but it wasn't enough. The timing was off." Discuss why the French were premature in starting the canal project. Why didn't they complete the project? Why were the Americans successful? What events or technological discoveries were necessary before the canal could be built?
3. Narrator McCullough also notes that "Science and technology change history - and never more so than in our own time. But science and technology are also the creations of history, and advances in either never just happen, as if in isolation." What does he mean by this statement? Support your opinions by using examples of scientific, medical, and technological breakthroughs, such as: the Apollo program, the polio vaccine, the computer. Provide your own examples of such breakthroughs.
4. The Panama Canal cost millions of dollars - it would be billions in today's currency - and more than 25,000 human lives. Compare this effort to other great engineering projects in American history: the transcontinental railroads in the 19th century, the water projects and dams of the American West in the 20th century - particularly in California, and the construction of major bridges such as the Brooklyn Bridge or the Golden Gate Bridge.
5. Consider why France and the United States wanted to build the Panama Canal. What did each nation have to gain? Was France's wish "to astonish the world with great deeds" a better (or different) reason than America's dream of a navy commanding two oceans? What impact did these interests have upon the nations of Colombia and Panama? Why did Panama gain control of the Canal in the year 2000? What effect will this have on the Canal? What is the current condition and status of the Canal?

