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# #10552

## BUILDING THE PANAMA CANAL

NEW DIMENSION MEDIA, 2003

Grade Level: 5-12

10 Minutes



### CAPTIONED MEDIA PROGRAM RELATED RESOURCE

[#3488 MIDDLE AMERICA: MEXICO TO VENEZUELA AND THE CARIBBEAN ISLANDS](#)

Funding for the Captioned Media Program is provided by the U.S. Department of Education

**TEACHER'S GUIDE**  
**Grades 5 to 12 & Up**

**Building the Panama Canal**  
**History Happened Here Series**

**Subject Areas:** Social Studies, United States History, World History

**Synopsis:** Documentary footage and dramatic reenactments tell the story of the construction of the Panama Canal. Explains the reasons Theodore Roosevelt wanted to build the canal and how he inspired the nation to rally behind the endeavor. Discusses Roosevelt's solutions to the problems of disease and mountainous terrain.

**Learning Objectives:**

- Objective 1)** Students will be able to recall Theodore Roosevelt's vision for the United States and explain how the construction of the Panama Canal would strengthen the U.S. Navy
- Objective 2)** Students will be able to explain how Roosevelt and his team of engineers overcame the challenges of disease and mountainous terrain, and how Roosevelt's personality helped the project
- Objective 3)** Students will be able to discuss the role of technology in the construction of the Panama Canal

**Vocabulary:**

waterway, tenacity, canal, terrain, tropical rain, viruses, global power, trench, sea-level, jungle sickness, dysentery, malaria, bubonic lay, yellow fever, quarantine, sanitize, menace, brigades, fumigation, larva, locks, dam

**Pre-Viewing Questions and Activities:**

- 1) Locate Panama and the Panama Canal on a map. Why was the canal built in Panama? Why did the United States have an interest in building the Panama Canal? What are the benefits of the Panama Canal? Are there any drawbacks?
- 2) Investigate the tropical climate of Panama. Describe the country's weather, terrain, plants and animals.

**Post-Viewing Questions and Discussion:**

- 1) Why was building the Panama Canal considered an impossible task? How many years did French workers spend in Panama attempting to build a canal? How many French died building the canal? (22,000) Why was it dangerous to go to Panama?
- 2) What was Roosevelt's vision for America? How would the Panama Canal help the United States become a world power? Could there be other benefits as a result of building the Panama Canal?
- 3) What diseases were construction workers on the Panama Canal struck with? What caused the spread of malaria and yellow fever? How did Roosevelt deal with this problem?

- 4) What were the problems with building the canal at sea level? How did Roosevelt's team of engineers solve this problem? How do locks work in a canal?
- 5) What materials were used to build the canal? How was the earth carried away? Where was the earth taken?
- 6) How many workers worked on the Panama Canal? Where were these workers from? To whom did Roosevelt compare these workers? How were they like an army?
- 7) When did President Roosevelt visit the Panama Canal? Why did he choose to go during the rainy season? What was the purpose of his visit?
- 8) In what way was the construction of the Panama Canal the defining task of the nation? Why was the United States able to build the Panama Canal? What was the role of technology in the endeavor? What was the role of human personality or character?

**Additional Activities:**

- 1) Have students write journal entries from the perspective of workers on the Panama Canal. Ask students to consider how it would feel to live in Panama, what type of work they would be doing, and how they would feel about being involved in the construction of the Panama Canal.
- 2) Investigate the habitat, diet, life cycle, and behavior of mosquitoes. How do mosquitoes spread disease? What diseases do mosquitoes commonly spread? Can these diseases be prevented? How? What are some possible ways to prevent or avoid catching diseases from mosquitoes?
- 3) Research how canal locks work and draw a model of a canal lock system.
- 4) Research the political history of the Canal. Who owned the land before it was built? What conflicts occurred after it was built? Who controls it now?

**Related New Dimension Media Titles:**

- Other programs in the History Happened Here Series
- Freedom Marches Into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century
- Cleveland, McKinley, & Theodore Roosevelt
- A New World Power
- Latin America: Thirsty Cities Series

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