

INTRODUCTION

This lesson allows students to analyze what the most significant inventions of the 20th Century are and how these inventions will impact the 21st century. Students will also consider how their lives would be affected by the absence of these items, which items have most helped society? And which have most harmed society.

OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- analyze the most important technological advances of the twentieth century and the impact they had on society, both good and bad.
- imagine how different their personal lives would be without these inventions.
- evaluate which inventions were most significant.

MATERIALS:

- Wipe board or chalk board
- Handout: *Time Magazine's 20 Most Influential Inventions of the 20th Century* and *Greatest Engineering Achievements of the Twentieth Century* **below

PROCEDURE:

1. As a class brainstorm some of the most significant technological advancements of the 20th Century.
2. Pass out the handouts - *Time Magazine's 20 Most Influential Inventions of the 20th Century* and *Greatest Engineering Achievements of the Twentieth Century*. Compare these lists with our brainstorming list.
3. Divide the class into smaller groups or pairs and assign each a different technological advancement. Have them discuss how the world would be different without this product. Share with the group.
4. As a class discuss which is the most significant invention of the 20th Century? Top Five? Imagine the state of the world if a different country had made this advancement first (maybe Germany, Russia, Japan, China).
5. Have each person think of his/her daily life. How would it be the most affected by the absence of these products? Which would most adversely affect your lifestyle? Have students jot down responses and share with the class.
6. In pairs, have students discuss which product has most helped society. (socially, environmentally, intellectually) Which has most harmed society? (socially, environmentally, intellectually) Share responses with the group.
7. In the large group, discuss which of these inventions will most greatly impact the 21st Century?



When Americans look back on the 20th century, four-in-ten cite technological advances as America's greatest achievement; another 7% mention medical breakthroughs. Overall, the single most-mentioned success is the space program. Almost one-in-five people cite the exploration of space as America's greatest feat.

**from The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press*

Time Magazine's 20 Most Influential Inventions of the 20th Century

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|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Automobile | 11. Radar |
| 2. Radio | 12. Magnetic tape |
| 3. Television | 13. Plastics |
| 4. Transistor | 14. Air conditioning |
| 5. Laser | 15. Global networks |
| 6. Electric refrigeration | 16. Atomic bomb |
| 7. Personal computer | 17. Artificial intelligence |
| 8. Wireless technology | 18. Fiber optics |
| 9. Manned spaceflight | 19. Xerography |
| 10. Airplane | 20. Internet |

Greatest Engineering Achievements of the Twentieth Century

**According to the National Academy of Engineering*

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| 1. Electrification | 12. Spacecraft |
| 2. Automobile | 13. Internet |
| 3. Airplane | 14. Imaging (microscopes, telescopes, etc.) |
| 4. Water Supply and Distribution | 15. Household Appliances |
| 5. Electronics | 16. Health Technologies |
| 6. Radio and Television | 17. Petroleum and Petrochemical Technologies |
| 7. Agricultural Mechanization | 18. Laser and Fiber optics |
| 8. Computers | 19. Nuclear Technologies |
| 9. Telephone | 20. High-Performance Materials (steel) |
| 10. Air Conditioning and Refrigeration | |
| 11. Highways | |



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