

Chapter 7: People Multiply and Dominate The Globe: The Modern Wave

Chapter 7. G. Media

Part I: The Early Modern Era 1500-1750

Amazing Grace: The History & Theology of Calvinism

2004, NR, 2 discs, available on Netflix

Drawing on the opinions and insights of a large cast of biblical scholars, theologians, pastors and the like, this documentary explores the history of Calvinism and examines the influence the theological system has had on Christianity at large. Highlights include the history of the Protestant Reformation, an examination of the five points of Arminianism, the pivotal clash between Pelagius and Augustine and the debate over evangelicalism. 3.1 stars

Catherine the Great

2006, NR, 120 minutes, available on Netflix

This superb PBS docudrama chronicles Catherine the Great, a minor 18th-century German princess who married into Russia's royal family and brought her adopted country into the modern world. Wedding the successor to the Russian throne at age 16, Catherine governed Russia for 34 years after fomenting a coup and ousting her husband. Her ambitious foreign policy and advancement of Western reforms greatly bolstered Russia's position on the world stage. 3.5 stars

Conquistadors

2000, NR, Seasons 1 DVD, available on Netflix

In this documentary, beloved historian Michael Wood recounts the adventures of the great Spanish conquistadors whose encounters with the Americas changed the modern world -- and all but obliterated the mighty Aztec and Incan empires. 3.7 stars

Egalite for All: Toussaint Louverture and the Haitian Revolution

2009, NR, 60 minutes, available on Netflix

This fascinating documentary explores a unique uprising at the turn of the 19th century: the Haitian Revolution, led by former slave Gen. Toussaint Louverture, which proved to be the only successful slave insurrection in world history. The remarkable event led to the establishment of the first black republic and provided inspiration for anti-slavery movements in the United States and all around the world. 3.2 stars

Elizabeth

2000, NR, 2 discs, available on Netflix

From Shakespeare to the Spanish Armada, the reign of Queen Elizabeth I embraced some of the most important events and personalities in British history. This documentary, hosted by world-renowned historian David Starkey, explores the life and rule of the woman who gave name to an era. A compelling blend of dramatic re-creations and incisive commentary brings alive the Virgin Queen's monumental -- and fascinating -- legacy. 3.7 stars

Empires: Martin Luther

2002, NR, 110 minutes, available on Netflix

Rabble-rouser or secular saint? The man who revolutionized the Christian church in the 16th century and became the father of Protestantism was probably a little bit of both. This historical look at Martin Luther originally aired on British television (and on PBS in the United States) and serves as a wonderful educational primer of a fascinating religious epoch. 3.8 stars

Guns, Germs and Steel

National Geographic, 2 discs, Jared Diamond, 2005, available on Netflix

After journeying to the four corners of the world to unearth the causes of inequality, professor Jared Diamond came up with a straightforward explanation: People's fortunes hinge on their geography and their contact with guns, germs and steel.

Landmarks of Western Art: The Renaissance

1999, NR, 50 minutes, available on Netflix

Combining sophisticated computer graphics with footage from distinguished galleries around the globe, this absorbing documentary -- which spotlights the works of Leonardo da Vinci, Michaelangelo, Raphael and Hans Holbein -- illustrates Renaissance art's enormous influence on civilization. Historians discuss how the Renaissance artists, who revived classical era techniques, created such a wealth of extraordinary pieces. 3 stars

Sir Isaac Newton: The Gravity of Genius

2004, NR, 50 minutes, available on Netflix

Isaac Newton has been called the Father of Modern Science, with a body of work that represents perhaps the greatest contribution to science ever made by one man. But despite living at the center of an inspired social scene, Newton's personal life was marked by loneliness. This documentary examines the discoveries and fears of this remarkable man. Leading scientists trace the impact of Newton's discoveries as well as his ever-present self-doubt. 3 stars

Peter the Great: The Tyrant Reformer

2000, NR, 50 minutes, available on Netflix

This revealing documentary draws on archival material and the research of scholars such as Nicholas Riasanovsky and Dr. Paul Bushkovitch to explore the life of Peter the Great, the czar who single-handedly modernized and Westernized Russia.

Part II: The Modern Industrial Era 1750-1900

Congo: White King, Red Rubber, Black Death

2004, NR, 84 minutes, available on Netflix

By re-creating King Leopold II of Belgium's brutal 19th century colonization of the Congo with modern-day actors, filmmaker Peter Bate presents a tragic chapter of European history that's been largely forgotten. In the process of harvesting rubber from a vast forced labor camp nestled in the region -- ruled with an iron fist by His Majesty himself -- millions of innocent Africans would die for the sake of profit. 3.1 stars

Elizabeth Cady Stanton & Susan B. Anthony (Not for Ourselves Alone)

1999, NR, 210 minutes, available on Netflix

Witness the dramatic story of two women who made an immensely important mark in American history -- Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. Their fight for equality in a male-dominated society more than 100 years ago gets the exhaustive and respectful treatment it deserves in this film directed by gifted documentarian Ken Burns. 3.8 stars

Empires: Queen Victoria's Empire

2001, NR, 219 minutes, available on Netflix

Donald Sutherland narrates this intriguing series on the life of Britain's Queen Victoria and her 64-year reign that saw the nation become an industrial superpower and expand its influence across the globe. Through personal accounts and dramatic reenactments, the four episodes create a vivid portrait of the queen, the times and the people who were influential in shaping British imperialism, including Victoria's husband, Prince Albert. 3.1 stars

The French Revolution

2005, NR, 100 minutes, available on Netflix

Driven by idealism and a society in crisis, the French Revolution erupted a little more than a decade after the American Revolution. This vivid documentary brings to life France's bloody 1789 uprising. The quest to stamp out feudalism and to cultivate progressive politics, diplomacy and equality is shown through dramatic reenactments and interviews with historians. Along the way, you'll meet crucial figures like Louis XIV and Napoleon Bonaparte. 3.7 stars

Marie Antoinette

2005, NR, 120 minutes, available on Netflix

Whether one believes that Marie Antoinette actually uttered those words that have her callously and mistakenly placating the hungry masses with cake, she persists as a figure few truly understand. This PBS film attempts to piece together a more accurate account of her identity, including her life as a young girl growing up in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, as queen during France's reign of excess and her final grisly fate. 3.7 stars

Russia: Land of the Tsars

2003NR2 discs

Trace the history of Russian imperialism (which ended with the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution and Czar Nicholas II's murder) via footage from historic sites and museums and insightful commentary from some of the foremost scholars on Russian history. Hours of fascinating material are included and will tell you all there is to know about Russia's long history under the autocratic rule of the Tsars.

Part III: The Modern Twentieth Century 1900-2000**Aristide and the Endless Revolution**

2005, NR, 84 minutes, available on Netflix

In this powerful documentary, filmmaker Nicolas Rossier trains his probing lens on the events that led to Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's ouster in 2004. Putting matters in context, the film delves into the country's troubled history and the role played by outside interests -- including the United States -- in deposing the controversial political figure. Aristide weighs in via interviews, as do a number of his defenders and detractors. 4 stars

The Battle of the Atlantic

2002, NR, 146 minutes, available on Netflix

By 1942, Hitler's U-boats had crippled shipping in the Atlantic, bringing Britain to the brink of starvation, but a key source of intelligence eventually enabled the Allies to gain the upper hand. Through eyewitness accounts from former U-boat crew members, archival footage of the submarines in action and dramatizations, this series chronicles the battle for control of the Atlantic. The video also includes a documentary on merchant seamen. 3.8 stars

Blitzkrieg: The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich

2009, NR, 93 minutes, available on Netflix

Rare archival American and German footage -- some never before seen -- bring to life the historic rise and fall of the Third Reich, including the invasion of Europe, the Battle of Britain and the Eastern Front, and much more. When Nazi Germany ravaged Poland with its Blitzkrieg brand of warfare in September 1939, few could have predicted that several years later the terrifying military muscle of the Third Reich would be on the brink of collapse. 3 stars

The Boer War & Other Colonial Adventures: The History of Warfare:

2007, NR, 55 minutes, available on Netflix

Featuring archival footage, dramatic reenactments, authoritative commentary and computer graphics, this fascinating documentary chronicles the end of the Zulu kingdom and the battle between imperial Britain and Dutch settlers during the Boer War -- the 19th century's last major colonial conflict. Narrated by actor Brian Blessed, the film includes analysis by well-known war historian David Chandler. 3 stars

The British Empire in Color

2002, NR, 147 minutes, available on Netflix

Weaving rare color footage, eyewitness accounts and interviews, this documentary crafts an unbiased portrait of the British Empire. Milestones such as the partitioning of India, the creation of the state of Israel, the Suez crisis, black nationalism in Africa and the 1997 handover of Hong Kong are presented from multiple viewpoints, revealing Britain's role in spreading education, law and democracy, as well as racism and cultural bigotry. 3 stars

Coca-Cola: The History of an American Icon

2001, NR, 145 minutes, available on Netflix

With its curvaceous, red-branded bottle and rich, dark liquid, Coca-Cola transformed itself from a run-of-the-mill beverage to a cultural icon. This fascinating documentary examines how John Pemberton's sweet concoction became firmly entrenched into the American zeitgeist, and what it's come to symbolize not only in this country but also the world over. Includes original commercials, pictures and more. 3 stars

The Colors of War: Pacific

2003, NR, 120 minutes, available on Netflix

This compilation of four uncut Academy Award-winning and nominated World War II combat documentaries includes *The Battle of Midway* and *Report from the Aleutians* by legendary directors John Ford and John Huston, respectively. *To the Shores of Iwo Jima* and *With the Marines at Tarawa* complete the collection. Bonus material includes raw footage of the Battle of Kawajalein and an interview with war photographer Joe Rosenthal. 3 stars

D-Day: The Normandy Invasion

2007, NR, 60 minutes, available on Netflix

Focusing on both the strategic overview of the military invasion and on personal stories of heroism, this documentary delves into the events of June 6, 1944, and the Normandy invasion. Taking the Germans by surprise, Allied soldiers marched onto France's shores and began the assault that ultimately ended World War II. Stories include the Allied landing at Omaha Beach, French liberation celebrations, valor at Pointe du Hoc and much more. 3 stars

Evita: The Woman Behind the Myth

1996, NR, 50 minutes, available on Netflix

Eva Duarte de Peron ("Evita") is one of the most controversial figures in history. A minor actress when she married Argentine president-to-be Juan Peron, her political power and prestige eventually equaled his. Was she a power-hungry Marie Antoinette? Or was she really the savior of the working poor? In this documentary, rare photographs and films tell Evita's real story, from her humble birth to her tragic death from cancer at 33. 3.3 stars

Fidel (Fidel: The Untold Story)

2002, NR, 91 minutes, available on Netflix

This documentary by director Estela Bravo takes a look at the political and social impact the immensely powerful Cuban dictator Fidel Castro has had on the world during the 40-plus years he's been in power. Through interviews with politicians (Nelson Mandela, Arthur Schlesinger), friends (Gabriel Garcia Marquez), and other cultural experts (Alice Walker), Fidel's personality and work are explored and discussed. 3.8 stars

First Person Singular: Elie Wiesel

2002, TV-PG, 60 minutes, available on Netflix

The impressive Elie Wiesel, author of the literary thunderbolt *Night* and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, ruminates on his life in this captivating PBS documentary. Wiesel, a survivor of Auschwitz, discusses his horrific encampment, his advocacy work for human rights and his thoughts on life in a post-9/11 world. 3 stars

The First World War: The Complete Series

2003, NR, 4 discs available on Netflix

Even though it heralded the birth of modern warfare and engendered mass destruction on an unprecedented scale, the world's first great war rarely receives as much attention as the second. This definitive 10-part series narrated by Jonathan Lewis outlines and analyzes World War I military strategy to show why "the war to end all wars" simply didn't, prompting an even bloodier conflict less than 20 years later. 4 stars

Gallipoli

2006, NR, 118 minutes, available on Netflix

Oscar winner Jeremy Irons and Golden Globe nominee Sam Neill narrate this meticulously produced docudrama exploring the battle of Gallipoli, a controversial contest fought by Great Britain and its allies against the Ottoman Empire during World War I. Filmed in seven countries over the course of six years, the program puts the campaign in historical context through dramatic reenactments, 3-D animation and interviews with noted experts. 3.8 stars

The Genocide Factor: Never Again?: Genocide Since the Holocaust

2008, NR, 57 minutes, available on Netflix

Focusing on horrific historical chapters such as Mao's purges in China, Pol Pot's bloody reign in Cambodia and the Arab-Israeli conflict, director Robert J. Emery explores the shameful examples of genocide found in the wake of World War II. Among the guests interviewed in this entry are Dr. Ben Kiernan, genocide studies program director at Yale University and Sophal Leng Stagg, Cambodian survivor and author of *Hear Me Now: Tragedy in Cambodia*. 2.8 stars

Great Souls: Nelson Mandela

2007, NR, 56 minutes, available on Netflix

The remarkable life of Nelson Mandela is chronicled in this volume of the Great Souls series. Friends, colleagues and experts share their stories about Mandela's happy childhood, extraordinary self-sacrifice as a freedom fighter, his decades of imprisonment and his presidential triumph. Filmed entirely in South Africa, this inspiring program reveals the strength and character of the man who led his nation out of apartheid and into the future. 3 stars

Hitler in Colour

2005, NR, 81 minutes, available on Netflix

Composed entirely of original color film, this documentary chronicles Hitler's rise to power, from his 1933 election to the 1945 fall of Berlin. Rare color footage is combined with eyewitness accounts and excerpts from diaries and correspondence. Footage includes Nazi rallies, Hitler's meeting with Lloyd George, the Buchenwald concentration camp, Warsaw's Jewish ghetto, the invasion of Poland, the Battle of Britain and the fall of Berlin. 3.6 stars

Hiroshima: BBC History of World War II

2005, NR, 90 minutes, available on Netflix

This fascinating documentary recounts the world's first nuclear attack and examines the alarming repercussions. Covering a three-week period from the New Mexico test blast to dropping the bomb on Hiroshima, the program chronicles America's political gamble and the planning for the momentous event. Archival film, dramatizations and special effects take viewers aboard the *Enola Gay* and inside the exploding bomb. 4 stars

Influenza 1918: The American Experience

1998, NR, 60 minutes, available on Netflix

In March 1918, scores of fit young soldiers poured into an Army hospital in Kansas. Their complaints of fever, sore throat and headache marked the first signs of a flu epidemic that would quickly ravage the nation. By year's end, the flu would kill nearly 700,000 Americans -- more than all U.S. combat deaths in that century combined. Interviews with survivors shed light on this horrifying and strangely forgotten chapter in history. 3.7 stars

Inside North Korea

National Geographic, 2006, NR, 50 minutes, available on Netflix

Disguised as a medical coordinator, National Geographic correspondent Lisa Ling gains access into North Korea and gives viewers a powerful glimpse inside one of the most restrictive countries in the world. Through personal accounts and exclusive footage, Ling exposes the difficulties North Koreans face while living in such an oppressive regime, coping with poverty, hunger and the lack of civil liberties. 3.9 stars

Joseph Stalin: Red Terror

2004, NR, 50 minutes, available on Netflix

Joseph Stalin ranks as one of the greatest tyrants of all time, responsible for the deaths of 20 million of his own countrymen. This portrait revisits the life of "Uncle Joe" via Soviet archival film and an astonishing collection of interviews. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the extent of Stalin's atrocities has been revealed, and he has taken his place alongside Hitler as one of the most reviled leaders of the 20th century

Mahatma Gandhi: Pilgrim of Peace

1997, NR, 50 minutes, available on Netflix

Mahatma Gandhi's pacifist life, considered a paradox by many, is explored in this "Biography" profile that interviews Gandhi's grandson, Arun Gandhi. Also, in a rare interview, the Dalai Lama reflects on Gandhi's incredible life and enduring legacy. 3.5 stars

Mahatma Gandhi: The Life and Times of a Modern Legend

2008, NR, 60 minutes, available on Netflix

Through peaceful civil disobedience, Mahatma Gandhi fought to alleviate poverty, liberate women, end discrimination and free India from British rule. This documentary explores Gandhi's impressive life and his important message of nonviolence. Gandhi's tremendous leadership and noble acts of passive resistance helped India achieve its independence in 1947, one year before he was tragically assassinated. 2.9 stars

Nanking

2007, R, 90 minutes, available on Netflix

Co-directors Bill Guttentag and Dan Sturman helm this Sundance selection chronicling the story of "the Rape of Nanking," a World War II-era tragedy in which more than 200,000 Chinese citizens were murdered and tens of thousands were raped at the hands of Japanese soldiers. Woody Harrelson, Mariel Hemingway and Stephen Dorff portray some of the Westerners who rose to the occasion with quiet acts of heroism. 3.6 stars

The Nazis: A Warning from History

1997, NR, 2 discs, available on Netflix

Through archival footage and interviews with those who survived Adolph Hitler's reign -- including unrepentant Nazis -- this comprehensive documentary series sheds new light on the rise of the Third Reich in Germany. Chapters reveal how the Nazi state compelled ordinary people to commit atrocities, the order and disorder within the German army, and Hitler's propensity for getting his minions to do his work, among other enlightening facts. 3.9 stars

Russian Revolution in Color

2007, NR, 90 minutes, available on Netflix

The Russian Revolution brought about the end of the reign of the czars and saw the rise of communism. This compilation of rarely seen color and colorized footage brings the reality of the civil war vividly to life. Noted historians offer their insights on these events that occurred nearly a century ago, events that paved the way for the formation of the Soviet Union and still resonate today. 3.7 stars

The Road to War: Great Britain, Italy, Japan, USA

2005, NR, 200 minutes, available on Netflix

What were the factors that led Great Britain, Italy, Japan and the United States to war? From the Great Depression and the aftereffects of World War I to the perceived threat of communism, Mussolini's dictatorship, Hitler's anti-Semitic policies and Japan's invasion of China, this documentary takes a close look at the buildup to the conflict and examines how each major nation decided that confrontation was inevitable. 3.2 stars

Sigmund Freud: Analysis of a Mind

1995, NR, 50 minutes, available on Netflix

Sigmund Freud's revolutionary ideas transformed our conception of the mind. Yet, fears and obsessions wracked the father of psychoanalysis. His theories continue to inspire debate, even as the discipline he invented drifts farther from his work. Through personal letters, diaries and interviews with biographers, psychiatrists and Freud's grandchildren, this documentary explores the life of the man who was once derided as the doctor of love. 3 stars

The Suffragettes

2008, NR, 60 minutes, available on Netflix

With the aid of archival footage, period photography and dramatized eyewitness accounts and reconstructions, this documentary commemorates the rise of the suffragettes and chronicles their fight for the female vote in the United Kingdom. The film also focuses on the life and work of suffragette leader Emmeline Pankhurst, who was famously sent to prison for her devotion to the cause and died the same year her dream was finally realized. 2.2 stars

The War of the World: A New History of the 20th Century

2008, NR, 180 minutes, available on Netflix

In this extraordinary series, Harvard historian Niall Ferguson offers a significant new perspective on the events of the 20th century, recasting the Cold War and the two World Wars as one continuous, racially motivated "Hundred Years' War." Ferguson also examines a central paradox: With its unparalleled advances in science and communications, why was the 20th century the most lethal in the history of humanity? 3.2 stars