A HISTORY® CHANNEL ORIGINAL

THE BERMUDA TRIANGLE
INTO CURSED WATERS.

HISTORY.
About the Show

In 1945, five U.S. Navy planes disappeared on the same night, along with a search and rescue plane dispatched to find them. No wreckage was ever found. Now, an elite team is investigating the Bermuda Triangle with the aid of a secret weapon—a map, decades in the making, marking the location of unidentified undersea wrecks and anomalies in the new series “The Bermuda Triangle: Into Cursed Waters.”

In November 2022, The HISTORY Channel announced the discovery of a twenty-foot segment of the 1986 Space Shuttle Challenger in the waters off the coast of Florida uncovered during the filming of the series. This marks the first major discovery of wreckage from the shuttle launch in more than twenty-five years. In this episode, viewers learn about this historic and emotional discovery.

To learn more about the series, please visit: https://www.history.com/shows/the-bermuda-triangle-into-cursed-waters.

Curriculum Links

This education guide would be useful for high school and middle school classes centering on American history, science, and technology.

Pre-viewing Suggestion

To learn more about the Challenger explosion and to provide context around the recent discovery, ask students to read this article: https://www.history.com/topics/1980s/challenger-disaster#section_3
Discussion Questions

1. What is the Bermuda Triangle? What was the first incident that fixated the public’s interest in it?
2. What was the dive team initially searching for when they came across a segment of the Challenger?
3. How did the dive team come to realize that they had not just found part of an ordinary aircraft, but a spacecraft? What was different about the structure?
4. In 1972, President Nixon signed off on the space shuttle program – NASA’s fourth human spaceflight program. What were the specific goals and purpose of the Space Shuttle program?
5. The Challenger was the second of five shuttles in NASA’s space shuttle fleet. What were some of the goals that NASA had envisioned for the Challenger expedition in 1986?
6. Where was the lift off location for the Challenger? And what was different about this day?
7. Who was Christa McAuliffe? Why was she part of the crew on the Challenger?
8. After the Challenger disaster, the US Navy undertook the largest salvage operation ever conducted in which they recovered over 120 tons of wreckage. This recent discovery by Mike Barnette and his dive team marks the first time in 26 years that a piece of the Challenger was found. Why is the recent discovery impactful?
9. Following the explosion, NASA paused the shuttle program until 1988. What changes were implemented at NASA and to the space shuttle program during this break?
10. What was the Rogers Commission? Discuss the findings of their investigation.
11. Who were some of the notable members on the task force Ronald Reagan implemented following the explosion?
12. At the end of episode one, Mike Ciannilli – program director at NASA – describes the Challenger tragedy as having changed the future for the better. As a class, discuss Challenger’s legacy. What lasting impacts have the Challenger, and the Space Shuttle program in general, had on space exploration today?
Related Activities:

1. **President Reagan’s Address**: The day of the *Challenger* explosion also happened to be the day President Reagan was scheduled to give the state of the Union address. In response to the tragedy, he delayed his SOTU speech and instead addressed the nation from the Resolute desk about the incident that occurred earlier that day. Read or watch his address as a class. As a group, discuss the effectiveness of President Reagan’s speech. Watch Here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qa7icmggsow](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qa7icmggsow)

2. **“Christa McAuliffe’s Lost Lessons”**: In 2019, three decades after her death, NASA released “Christa McAuliffe’s Lost Lessons” as a tribute to her memory. Students can view them here: [https://www.challenger.org/challenger_lessons/christas-lost-lessons](https://www.challenger.org/challenger_lessons/christas-lost-lessons). In an essay format, explore Christa McAuliffe’s legacy and discuss ways in which we can continue to honor her today.

3. **The 21st Century Space Race**: Reminders of tragedies like the *Challenger* explosion may cause many to question the purpose of sending humans to space, especially given the development of automated technologies. At the same time, human space exploration has opened up new horizons. Most recently, we’ve seen private companies like SpaceX, Blue Origin, and Virgin Galactic making headlines for their first civilian spaceflight launches. Do some research around the future of space exploration and write a short essay comparing 21st century space exploration to that of the 20th century. Be sure to outline the specific goals of NASA, SpaceX, Blue Origin, and Virgin Galactic.

4. **The Space Shuttle Program**: NASA’s Space Shuttle program ran for 30 years until they completed their 135th mission in 2011. Create a timeline of key events during the Space Shuttle Era beginning with President Nixon’s announcement of program in 1972 and ending with the final mission in 2011. Your timeline should make note of the specific achievements and failures of the program. Once complete, discuss as a group whether you believe the program was successful or not.

**Related Content from History.com**:


- President Nixon Launches Space Shuttle Program: [https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/nixon-launches-the-space-shuttle-program](https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/nixon-launches-the-space-shuttle-program)

- NASA’s Final Space Shuttle Mission Comes To An End: [https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/nasas-final-space-shuttle-mission-comes-to-an-end](https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/nasas-final-space-shuttle-mission-comes-to-an-end)

Other Related Content

50 Years Ago: President Nixon Directs NASA to Build the Space Shuttle: [https://www.nasa.gov/feature/50-years-ago-president-nixon-directs-nasa-to-build-the-space-shuttle](https://www.nasa.gov/feature/50-years-ago-president-nixon-directs-nasa-to-build-the-space-shuttle)


Space Shuttle: The First Reusable Spacecraft: [https://www.space.com/16726-space-shuttle.html](https://www.space.com/16726-space-shuttle.html)

Christa McAuliffe – Biography: [https://www.biography.com/astronaut/christa-mcauliffe](https://www.biography.com/astronaut/christa-mcauliffe)