

Chapter 7

Montana's Resource-Driven Economy

1940S–1960S

(17:30 minutes)

Synopsis

This 18-minute video describes how Montana's resource-driven economy experienced its golden age following World War II. Jobs were plentiful in timber, mining, and agriculture. A booming national economy created a large American middle class with the means and desire to travel. Consequently, tourism became increasingly important to the state's economy. Federal government investments in highways and in defense (particularly Cold War-era missile silos) also dramatically impacted the state's economy. While Montanans look back nostalgically to this economic "golden age," the video cautions that Montanans cannot assume its natural resources alone can support the state's economy in the future.

► The video begins with students giving their best answer to the following focus question: **"What kind of work is there in Montana?"** Teachers may wish to ask their students the same question before viewing the episode.

In addition, teachers may wish to ask the following question, which will be answered by the narrator: **"What kind of work was there in post-World War II Montana?"**

The narrator states:

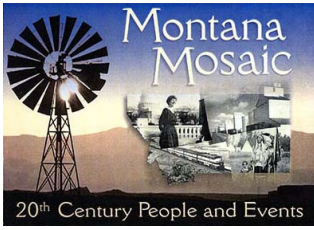
"Like the rest of the nation, Montana pulled out of the Great Depression in the early 1940s with the United States' sudden immersion into World War II (1941–1945). Montana agriculture recovered when the long drought cycle ended and a series of wet years produced bumper crops and robust livestock herds again. World War II markets demanded Montana's natural resources—especially timber, copper, petroleum, hydroelectric power, and coal. An economy based on the extraction and development of natural resources drove Montana's golden economic age through the 1950s and 1960s. National markets and federal programs dictated Montanan's economic course. Slowly, the state's transportation system shifted from railroads to automobiles and long-haul trucks. Tourists began arriving in significant numbers. When the federal government installed missile silos across northern Montana, the state became tied to the international Cold War and reaped the profits of federal contracts."

Post-viewing Discussion Questions

Engage students' critical thinking skills and elicit their emotional responses with the following four questions, most easily remembered through the acronym DICE: What **disturbed** you? What **interested** you? What **confused** you? What **enlightened** you?

"Getting at the Meaning" Questions

1. What changes occurred in Montana after World War II that helped begin Montana's economic recovery?
2. How did logging, mining, and agriculture change with advances in technology? How did these changes affect the workers in these industries?
3. How has the increase in and need for tourism affected Montanans' perception of themselves and their state?
4. Some Montanans with roots in the timber and mining industries blame environmentalism for the loss of jobs in these sectors. Using information from the video, how would you respond to this claim?



(Chapter 7, continued)

5. What do you think is necessary for Montana to maintain a strong economy in the 21st century?

Vocabulary Terms

Open-pit mining: a type of mining which removes low-grade ore using huge earth-moving equipment, as seen in the Berkeley pit. Open-pit mining phased out underground mining, which targeted high-grade copper veins and required thousands of skilled miners.

Additional Resources

For more information on topics addressed in this episode, see *Montana: Stories of the Land*, Chapter 20, “Building a New Montana: 1945–1965” (<https://mhs.mt.gov/education/textbook/chapter20/Chapter20.pdf>).

Content Standards

This chapter of *Montana Mosaic* aligns to the Montana Social Studies Content Standards as follows: 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 4.2, 4.5, 5.1, 5.2, 5.6, 6.3, 6.6