

Chapter 10

The Anaconda Copper Mining Company

(16:00 minutes)

Synopsis

This 16-minute video discusses the history of the Anaconda Copper Mining Company as a dominant player in shaping the past and, through its absence, the future of Montana. The video specifically focuses on the 1977 demise of the company and the end of its far-reaching control and influence. Today Montana continues to cope with the environmental and economic legacies of the Anaconda Company's century of dominance.

► The video begins with students giving their best answer to the following focus questions: **“What do you know about Butte?”** and **“What was the Anaconda Copper Mining Company?”** Teachers may wish to ask their students the same question before viewing the episode.

The narrator answers the second focus question:

“In many ways the story of the Anaconda Copper Mining Company, through the first seven decades of the Twentieth Century, best illustrates trends in the Montana economy. The Anaconda Company dominated the state’s metals industry and influenced other business sectors. It developed a ‘copper press’ to manage journalism in the state, played a major role in the Montana legislature, and teamed with the Montana Power Company on many fronts. The Company’s ultimate demise tells a larger tale about the shift in Montana’s economic base. To many Montanans, the story of the Anaconda Company is the story of Twentieth Century Montana.”

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?

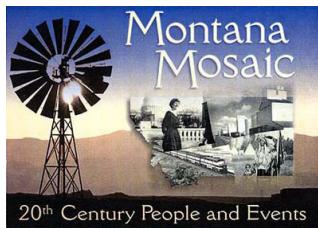
“Getting at the Meaning” Questions

1. The video states that the Anaconda Company controlled Montana’s economic destiny. What factors today do you believe will significantly affect Montana’s future “economic destiny?”
2. Describe the repercussions of the Anaconda Company’s decision to close its mines in Butte, and, particularly, how it affected Butte’s economy, identity, and community.
3. In your opinion, what lessons should be learned from the dominance and decline of the Anaconda Copper Mining Company?

Vocabulary Terms

ARCO: the Atlantic Richfield Company, which is one of the largest oil corporations in the world. The company purchased Anaconda Copper properties after it closed down, but by 1985 ARCO had closed its smelters and ended its Montana operations for good.

Superfund site: a hazardous waste site that is part of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Superfund pollution clean-up program.



(Chapter 10, continued)

Additional Resources

For more information on topics addressed in this episode, see *Montana: Stories of the Land*, Chapter 10, "Politics and the Copper Kings, 1889–1904," (<https://mhs.mt.gov/education/textbook/chapter10/Chapter10.pdf>), and *Montana: Stories of the Land*, Chapter 22, "Living in a New Montana, 1970–2007" (<https://mhs.mt.gov/education/textbook/chapter22/Chapter22.pdf>).

Content Standards

Montana State Social Studies Standards

SS.E.6-8.1. Explain how economic decisions impact individuals, businesses, and society, including Indigenous societies.

SS.E.6-8.2. Analyze examples of how groups and individuals have considered profit and personal values in making economic choices in the past and/or present.

SS.G.6-8.4. Explain how the environment and geographic features have affected people and how people have affected the environment throughout Montana, the United States, and the world.

SS.H.6-8.5. Explain how Montana has changed over time and how this history impacts the present.

SS.H.6-8.6. Understand that there are multiple perspectives and interpretations of historical events.

SS.G.9-12.5. Evaluate the impact of human settlement activities on the environmental, political, and cultural characteristics of specific places and regions.

SS.G.9-12.8. Evaluate the consequences of human-driven and natural catastrophes on global trade, politics, and human migration.

SS.H.9-12.1. Analyze how unique circumstances of time, place, and historical contexts shape individuals' lives.

SS.H.9-12.2. Analyze change and continuity in historical eras in US and world history.

SS.H.9-12.5. Explain events in relation to both their intended and unintended consequences, including governmental policies impacting American Indians.