# Our Changing World: Keep Up

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## Resources:

- The World Book Encyclopedia
- FamilyEducation.com
- MyHistory.org
- PBS online
- Nobel e-Museum
- American College of Physicians online
- Timelines.info
- Illinois Labor History Society
- Timelines: A Millennium Passes, by Knight Ridder Productions

## Credits

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Getting around
- Bicycle
- Helicopter
- Jet plane
- Locomotive
- Motorcycle
- Parachute
- Wheel

Around the house
- Clock
- Cosmetics
- Flushing toilet
- Lawn mower
- Microwave oven
- Piano
- Refrigerator
- Sewing machine

School stuff
- Atom model
- Calculus
- Computer
- Geometry
- I.Q. test
- Paper
- Periodic table
- Zero

Just for fun
- Camera
- Car radio
- Chewing gum
- CD
- Motion pictures
- Phonograph
- Telephone
- Television
- VCR

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Some of the more obvious changes are a result of advances in technology. Machines have changed — and continue to change — the way we communicate, cook, drive, relax, and play. But change involves more than gadgets. We hatch new ideas, tackle new challenges, write new books, and create new looks.

Keeping up with our changing world is a chore. And while you can’t be on top of every change — minute by minute — you owe it to yourself to be aware of changes that can make you healthier, wealthier, and wiser.

If it seems like our world isn’t changing that much, consider how far humans have come. Take a look at the lists to the left and see if you can guess when these important inventions and discoveries first made the scene. (OK, maybe chewing gum isn’t that important.)

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### Activities

**COMPLETE**

1. As a class, discuss the advantages and disadvantages of keeping up with our changing world using newspapers, TV, radio, magazines, the Internet, and word of mouth.

**COMPLETE**

2. Take a poll. Ask adults how much time they spend keeping up with world and local events by using the types of media listed above. Compare your results with the rest of the class.

**COMPLETE**

3. Write a three-minute plan for reading the newspaper. Describe how you could quickly understand what’s happening with just a quick look at the newspaper.

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### Answers

**Getting around**
- 1. Wheel (3800 B.C.)
- 2. Parachute (A.D.1783)
- 3. Locomotive (1804)
- 4. Bicycle (1884)
- 5. Motorcycle (1885)
- 6. Helicopter (1936)
- 7. Jet plane (1939)

**Around the house**
- 1. Cosmetics (4000 B.C.)
- 2. Flushing toilet (2000 B.C.)
- 3. Clock (A.D.1656)
- 4. Piano (1709)
- 5. Lawn mower (1830)
- 6. Sewing machine (1846)
- 7. Refrigerator (1850)
- 8. Microwave oven (1947)

**School stuff**
- 1. Geometry (300 B.C.)
- 2. Paper (A.D. 100)
- 3. Zero (600)
- 4. Calculus (1669)
- 5. Periodic table (1869)
- 6. I.Q. tests (1905)
- 7. Atom model (1911)
- 8. Computer (1945)

**Just for fun**
- 1. Chewing gum (1870)
- 2. Telephone (1876)
- 3. Phonograph (1877)
- 4. Camera (1888)
- 5. Motion pictures (1893)
- 6. Television (1927)
- 7. Car radio (1929)
- 8. CD (1972)
- 9. VCR (1975)
- 10. Fiveparagraph (1830)

Source: infoplease.com
Humans are sick! — injured and diseased, too. We always have been, and we have always looked for ways to get better. Archeological evidence shows that even during the Stone Age, brain surgery was attempted, using things like flint, shell, and shark teeth. The road to modern medicine has been long, strange, and remarkable. Take a look at some of the milestones of medicine.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<td>c. 800 B.C.</td>
<td>The world’s first medical textbook, Yellow Emperor’s Cannon of Internal Medicine, explains techniques of traditional Chinese medicine.</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. A.D. 170</td>
<td>Turkish physician Galen proves that arteries and veins carry blood — not air, as previously thought.</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. 1008</td>
<td>An Arabian physician named Ibn Sina, known in the Western World as Avicenna, writes a medical encyclopedia that is used for the next six centuries.</td>
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<td>1628</td>
<td>English physician William Harvey explains that blood circulates through arteries, veins, and the heart.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1796</td>
<td>Edward Jenner uses cowpox (a mild skin disease) as a vaccination — a protection — against smallpox.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1863</td>
<td>Mary Harris Thompson becomes the first female surgeon in the United States.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>Louis Pasteur proves that animal diseases caused by bacteria can be prevented.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>Discovering what he calls an X-ray, Wilhelm Roentgen sees the bones of his hands on a photographic plate.</td>
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<td>1928</td>
<td>Alexander Fleming notices that a mold called penicillium keeps bacteria from growing, but not until 1940 do scientists use penicillin to save millions of lives.</td>
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<td>1954</td>
<td>Dr. Jonas Salk’s polio vaccination lowers the U.S. polio rate 80 percent in three years.</td>
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<td>1962</td>
<td>Scientists in England — James Watson, Francis Crick, and Maurice Wilkins — show how DNA is responsible for heredity.</td>
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<td>1967</td>
<td>Dr. Christiaan Barnard performs a heart transplant — the first ever — in Cape Town, South Africa.</td>
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<td>1982</td>
<td>Dr. Robert Jarvik invents an artificial heart that is implanted in the chest of Barney Clark by Dr. William DeVries.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Scientists announce they are raising a lamb that was cloned — copied — using its mother’s cells and an egg.</td>
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Medicine has made enormous advances, but new treatments don't come cheap. Tear your ACL (knee ligament) in a soccer game, and it’ll cost $17,000 to repair. Or if you need a liver transplant (yikes!), the bill is $235,000.

People with health insurance, a sort of shield against high health-care costs, don’t pay the whole amount when they visit their doctor, pharmacist, or hospital. They pay a set amount (called a co-pay), and their insurance company pays the rest. These companies collect payments from all their customers and use that money to pay the bills of customers who get sick or injured.

It’s difficult and expensive for an individual to get insurance, so many people get insurance coverage through their employers. The employer gets an insurance policy to cover its employees, and employers and employees share the cost of the coverage. Many retired or disabled people who don’t work get insurance assistance through government programs such as Medicare or Medicaid.

Because of unemployment or ongoing medical problems, though, some 43 million U.S. citizens are uninsured. That’s equal to the population of New York, Florida, Washington, and Hawaii combined!

How can a family face the high cost of health care without insurance? Will costs keep going higher? What changes are in the works?

Politicians, human-resource officers, and insurance providers are seeking answers to health-care issues. Invite one or more of these experts to talk your class.

Think of one thing people can do to improve their health, then write a letter to the editor. Find a news story to back up your point and use it to encourage readers to change their behavior.

What will be the next medical breakthrough? In small groups, find a news story about a scientific breakthrough that can save or prolong lives.

A healthy diet can help you avoid expensive health care. Using grocery store ads, make a shopping list for a healthy meal. Share your list with the rest of the class.

Go through the sports section for several days and make a list of all the athletes who have surgery to repair an injury. Call it your “All-Rehab Team.”

Throughout the history of health care, men and women have worked to perfect theories and techniques. And they’re still working. As our understanding of chemistry, genetics, and physics grows, so do medical tools and treatments. The following statements reflect humankind’s view of the ever-changing field of medicine:

“Because the newer methods of treatment are good, it does not follow that the old ones were bad: for if our honorable and worshipful ancestors had not recovered from their ailments, you and I would not be here today.”
— Confucius (551-478 B.C.), Chinese philosopher

“The philosophies of one age have become the absurdities of the next, and the foolishness of yesterday has become the wisdom of tomorrow.”
— William Osler (1849-1919), Canadian-born physician and professor of medicine

“Formerly, when religion was strong and science weak, men mistook magic for medicine; now, when science is strong and religion weak, men mistake medicine for magic.”
— Thomas Szasz (1920- ), Hungarian-born philosopher and psychiatrist
Conflict, like a tree, rarely has only one root. Whether it’s a fistfight at school or a firefight in a faraway land, most conflicts are caused by a combination of actions and reactions. Below are three common causes of conflict. For any argument — or war — any or all might be present, along with other factors mixed in.

**Greed (“That’s mine!”)** Toddlers who want the same toy might have a pulling contest; adults who want the same parking space might have a pushing match; countries that want the same parcel of land might have a war.

**Intolerance (“You’re crazy!”)** Conflict isn’t unavoidable when two people, two groups, or two nations hold different beliefs. But when at least one of those people, groups, or nations won’t accept that the other can think, govern, or worship differently, the battle is on.

**Quest for power (“I’m in charge!”** Sometimes, a person, group, or country will make an enemy of someone they want to control. Maybe they feel threatened or maybe they’re just mean, but the quest for power often leads to conflict.

**KEEP UP WITH WAR**

Throughout history, humans have waged wars with different weapons: spears, cannon, submarines, and nuclear missiles. The strategies of armed conflict have changed, too: laying siege to fortresses, forming straight lines on the battlefield, sending in robotic jet fighters, and committing deadly acts of terrorism.

For centuries, people have tried to prevent or limit wars — and no wonder. During World War II, the United States suffered 405,399 deaths and spent more than $263 billion.

As a class, discuss who makes the decision to fight a war. When is it worth the money — and lives? Based on news stories, where in the world do you predict the next conflict will take place?
Words About War

“All war represents a failure of diplomacy.”
— Tony Benn (1925- ), British politician

“War is a blessing compared with national degradation.”
— Andrew Jackson (1767-1845), U.S. president, 1829-1837

“Making peace, I have found, is much harder than making war.”
— Gerry Adams (1948- ), president, Sinn Fein (Irish political party)

“There never was a good war or a bad peace.”
— Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790), U.S. statesman, writer

“You can no more win a war than you can win an earthquake.”
— Jeannette Rankin (1880-1973), U.S. suffragist

“We have always said that in our war with the Arabs we had a secret weapon — no alternative.”
— Golda Meir (1898-1978), Prime Minister of Israel 1969-1974

“A Prize for Peace

Peace is one of the five areas in which a Nobel Prize is awarded. Alfred Nobel, a Swedish industrialist and the inventor of dynamite, created a fund to reward people whose work helped humanity.

In his will, Nobel stated that one prize be given to the person who “shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses.”

Past winners include Theodore Roosevelt (1906), for negotiating peace between Russia and Japan; Martin Luther King Jr. (1964), for seeking racial equality through peaceful means; and Mother Teresa (1979), who dedicated her life to helping India’s poor.

Who is working toward peace today? Look through an issue of the newspaper and pick out one person who’s making a positive impact in your town, country, or world. Write a paragraph nominating that person for a peace prize.

Activities

1. Look for stories in the newspaper about armed conflict. In small groups, list where the fighting is, who is fighting, and the reasons for fighting. Share your list with the class and discuss the involvement of the U.S. government.

2. Find other types of conflicts in the newspaper (there will be plenty), and label each one as a conflict over money, opinions, property, or pride.

3. Of the many conflicts you find in the newspaper, pick one you feel strongly about and write an opinion column in which you try to persuade others to believe as you do.

4. Pick a conflict (local, national, or international) and think about where it is heading. Then, write a series of headlines that lead from the present situation to your predicted outcome. Write at least six headlines, and share them with the class.

“Politics is war without bloodshed while war is politics with bloodshed.”
— Mao Zedong (1893-1976), founder of the People’s Republic of China
ACTIVITIES

1. Be honest. List five countries on this map you had never heard of before opening this study guide. Research these countries and share a few fun facts about each with the rest of the class.

2. Look at the datelines (point of origin) of news stories throughout the newspaper. Mark the map with each country you’ve found in the datelines. How well does your newspaper cover the globe?

3. Search newspapers, encyclopedias, and Internet sites to find lists of countries. The lists could be anything: most immigrants to the United States, biggest consumers of tomatoes, wealthiest, poorest, etc. Using the list, locate the Top 5 countries and color them in on this map. Do you see any geographic patterns? Explain your findings to other class members.

4. In small groups, plan a “new world vacation.” Select countries that are new (or ones you know nothing about), research them, and write a travel itinerary for exploring these new lands. Share your travel plans with the class.
... AND ITS BOUNDARIES
generations ago, most people farmed, performed a craft, or worked for a farmer or craftsman. But as society and technology changed, large numbers of people began working for a single employer or company. Since then, employers, employees, and governments have struggled to create workplaces that are safe for employees and profitable for employers.

### MILESTONES

1556 Georgius Agricola writes how miners in the Carpathian Mountains suffered from tuberculosis and lung cancer.

1700 Bertrand Ramazzini, an Italian physician, documents the dangers of unhealthy working conditions in Diseases of Workers.

1775 English physician Percival Pott links cancer in chimney sweeps to their exposure to cancer-causing agents in soot.

1790 First U.S. textile mill is established in Pawtucket, R.I. All the workers are under age 12.

1830 A British newspaper describes children, age 7 to 14, who work from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. — with a half-hour to eat and play.

1834 The Factory Girls’ Association is formed in Lowell, Mass. They go on strike over working conditions and wages.

1845 Female workers in five cotton mills in Allegheny, Pa., go on strike to reduce the workday to 10 hours.

1848 Child labor law in Pennsylvania makes 12 the minimum age for workers in commercial occupations.

1868 The first federal law for the eight-hour day is passed; it applies only to government-employed laborers.

1890 Upton Sinclair publishes The Jungle, which exposes unsafe and unsanitary conditions in the Chicago meatpacking industry.


1911 A fire at the Triangle Shirtwaist Company in New York City kills 146 workers, mostly women.

1918 The Equal Pay Act is passed, prohibiting wage differences for workers based on gender.

1943 War-related industry is booming, but more Americans are killed and injured at work than on the battlefield.

1943 The Civil Rights Act is passed, outlawing discrimination in employment based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.

1963 The Age Discrimination in Employment Act makes it illegal to discriminate against workers age 40 to 65.

1963 The Occupational Safety and Health Act is passed, protecting workers in all fields, not just a few industries.

1968 The Americans with Disabilities Act prohibits employers from discriminating against qualified individuals with physical or mental impairments.

1981 IBM introduces its Personal Computer, which uses Microsoft’s 16-bit operating system.

1989 Cartoonist Scott Adams launches Dilbert, a comic strip that makes fun of office workers. Dilbert eventually appears daily in 2,000 newspapers worldwide.

1992 The Family and Medical Leave Act entitles employees to take up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave for certain family and medical reasons.

2000 Workplace homicides are the third leading cause of job-related deaths. The leading motive is robbery.
Activities

1. Today’s workplace is more diverse than in years past. Look through the newspaper to find examples of women and minorities in jobs that they could not have expected to attain 50 years ago. As a class, discuss how businesses benefit from having a diverse work force.

2. Look in the employment section of the classified ads and randomly pick out five jobs. For each job, list the changes you think that type of job must have undergone in the last five, 10, 50, and 100 years. Which jobs didn’t even exist way back then?

3. Look in the newspaper for a story about job safety issues that affect people where they work. List the issues on the board and discuss their causes.

4. Look at job listings in the classified ads. Which benefits from the “Keep Up With the Workplace” list are mentioned in ads? Make a list of questions about benefits that you might ask an employer during a job interview.

Keep Up With the Workplace

What would a factory worker of the 1830s think about today’s workplace? Working 10 or 12 hours a day, did she even have time to imagine teleconferences, in-house child-care centers, or coffee breaks? Look at the following list of benefits and services that some employers provide in order to keep workers happy and productive:

- Health insurance
- Paid vacations
- Paid sick days
- Retirement plan
- Investment savings plan
- Flexible work hours (12-hour weekend shifts, four 10-hour days, etc.)
- Job sharing (two people work part-time to fill a full-time job)
- Telecommuting (working at home and staying connected by computer)
- Wellness programs (equipment and programs to improve employees’ health)
- Personal services (dry cleaner pick-ups, grocery shopping, etc.)

As a class, discuss the importance of each of these work-related benefits. Which ones will you insist on when starting a job? Ask your parents and other family members which benefits are available to them at work. Which were available to them 10 years ago?

Quotes

“Public opinion actually applauds the young woman venturing into the business world, but it still ... protects the young man in his sacred right to know nothing of housework.”
— Crystal Eastman (1881–1928), U.S. political activist and author

“One machine can do the work of fifty ordinary men. No machine can do the work of one extraordinary man.”
— Elbert Hubbard (1856–1915), U.S. author

“A work-room should be like an old shoe; no matter how shabby, it’s better than a new one.”
— Willa Cather (1873–1947), U.S. novelist, in The Professor’s House
hen he invented the telephone, Alexander Graham Bell imagined the day that friends could talk to each other without leaving home. More than 125 years later, friends can communicate by telephone, cell phone, e-mail (desktop computer or wireless), pager, or fax. Advances in technology have also changed the way we travel, work, play, live, and take care of ourselves.

**1041** Chinese inventor Pi Cheng invents the printing press using movable type made from a baked mixture of clay and glue.

**1794** Eli Whitney patents his machine to comb and deseed bolls of cotton, revolutionizing the cotton industry.

**1807** Robert Fulton’s steamboat “Clermont” opens American rivers to two-way travel when it journeys 150 miles upstream between New York and Albany.

**1830** Joseph Henry, a professor at the Albany Academy, builds an electromagnet motor.

**1844** Samuel F.B. Morse demonstrates his telegraph by sending a message to Baltimore from Washington, D.C.

**1865** William Bullock introduces a printing press that feeds paper on a continuous roll and prints both sides of the paper at once. Sadly, Bullock later dies when he falls into one of his presses.

**1875** During the next four years, the inventions of Thomas Alva Edison include a mimeograph (copier), phonograph, and incandescent light bulb.

**1876** On Valentine’s Day, Alexander Graham Bell patents his telephone. Over the next decade, Bell wins more than 600 court cases to protect his patent.

**1885** The first “skyscraper” (10 stories!) to use steel-girder construction is built in Chicago.

**1888** George Eastman starts snapping photos with the first portable camera.

**1893** The Duryea brothers, a pair of bicycle mechanics, design and drive the first successful American gasoline automobile. French and German inventors had developed motorized transportation earlier in the decade.

**1891** Thomas A. Edison and William Dickson introduce their kinetoscope, a forerunner of the movie projector.

**1902** In Buffalo, Willis H. Carrier designs the first air conditioning system. Whew!

**1903** At Kitty Hawk, N.C., Wilbur Wright pilots the first powered, controlled airplane flight in history. It lasts 12 seconds. Later that day, his brother Orville flies for 59 seconds.

**1927** Philo Farnsworth, age 22, broadcasts a blurry image on a 4-inch screen — the first all-electronic television. Once his invention warms up, though, Farnsworth forbids his children from watching TV because he doesn’t like the shows.

**1939** John Atanasoff and Clifford Berry create the first digital computer. It stores data, adds and subtracts!

**1957** Russians launch Sputnik, the first artificial satellite, and U.S. leaders fear attacks from space. Three months later, the U.S. sends the Explorer I satellite into orbit.

**1972** Pong, one of the first mass-produced video games, becomes popular.

**1974** The first bar-coded products are scanned in stores using laser technology.

**1989** The World Wide Web is launched, creating a whole new wave of “surfing.”

**1999** Global satellite positioning allows car drivers to get directions from space.
**KEEP UP WITH TECHNOLOGY**

Technology is cool, but it's costly. In 1990, Americans spent $8.9 billion on computer equipment and software. By 1999, we were spending $31.9 billion. That doesn’t include monthly charges for Internet access, for the telephone line (or two) into most families’ homes, or for cable TV, cellular phones, etc.

How much does your family spend to stay connected? Make a list of all the electronic gadgets and systems you use, and then rank them in order of importance. What’s the one item you couldn’t live without? Which one would you give up first? Discuss your list with the rest of the class.

**ACTIVITIES**

- **1.** Look at the display ads in the newspaper and do some research to find which products were created since World War II (1945). Make a list of those products. Which items on your list have been created in the last 10 years?

- **2.** Read the news stories on the front page of the newspaper and mark every word or phrase that relates to the use of technology. What types of stories are more technology heavy? What types contain the fewest references to technology? Discuss as a class.

- **3.** Go through the newspaper and list every advertised cell phone plan. As a class, discuss how different plans might be better for different people. Create a rating system a reader could use when shopping for a cell phone plan.

- **4.** Invite someone from your local newspaper to talk to your class about the ways newspapers use technology to gather and publish the news.

**QUOTES**

**TECH TALK**

“The real problem is not whether machines think but whether men do.”
— B. F. Skinner (1904 –1990), U.S. psychologist

“I think there is a world market for maybe five computers.”
— Thomas Watson (1874–1956), former IBM Chairman, quoted in 1943

“Everything that can be invented has been invented.”
— Charles H. Duell, Commissioner, U.S. Office of Patents, quoted in 1899

“I have not failed. I’ve just found 10,000 ways that won’t work.”
— Thomas Edison (1847–1931), U.S. inventor

“There is no reason for any individual to have a computer in their home.”
— Ken Olson, founder and president of Digital Equipment Corporation, in a 1977 speech

“Wow! They’ve got the Internet on computers now!”
— Homer Simpson of “The Simpsons” cartoon, 1998

“640K ought to be enough for anybody.”
— Microsoft Chairman Bill Gates, 1981
There’s something about coming to school, being in school, and studying school, that seems so, well … educational! Getting an education today isn’t like the old days, though. The world of education has changed — and continues to change. Imagine yourself during the following time periods:

3000 B.C., Egypt If you’re in school, you’re probably a boy from an upper-class family, and your teacher is a temple priest. You learn to write by copying the same literary pieces over and over.

600 B.C., Greece If you’re the son of a citizen of Athens, you’ll learn about reading, music, and arithmetic by going from house to house, visiting teachers.

100 B.C., China Under the Chinese examination system, you’ll spend years memorizing the writings of Confucius in hopes of earning a civil service job.

A.D. 900, Europe If you’re entering the priesthood, you get a formal education from the local priest. If you’re going into a trade, the local guild, or professional organization, will teach you all you need to know about a specific job or craft.

1400, Europe You’d better be good at memorizing. Many books are translated from Latin and Greek into the local language, but since they have to be copied by hand, books are rare and expensive.

1455, Germany A goldsmith named Johann Gutenberg combines printing techniques from Asia with his own ideas and develops a printing press that revolutionizes learning. When books become widespread, education is available to more children.

1536, England The good news is you’ve got graphite pencils. The bad news is erasers won’t be attached until 1858.

1647, Massachusetts You live in a colony that requires towns to establish a public elementary school or be fined. Many towns choose the fine over the expense of setting up a school.

1680, Europe During what’s called the Age of Reason, new technologies — and startling discoveries in astronomy, chemistry and physiology — yield something new for you in school, too: science class.

1820, Prussia Instead of a church-sponsored school, you’re in a public school with a focus on national pride. When German states come together in 50 years, they all copy the Prussian school system.

1957, Little Rock, Ark. You can’t get into Central High School because it’s surrounded by adults who seem to hate you. They’re mad because, for the first time, African-Americans will be admitted to city schools. You’re there because you’re one of nine black teen-agers brave enough to try to attend.

2000, United States Your school has access to the Internet, something unheard of a generation ago. In 1994, 35 percent of all schools had Internet access. Today, 98 percent are online.
SCHOOL REPORTS

"The school is the last expenditure upon which America should be willing to economize."
— Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882–1945), U.S. president

"Education makes a people easy to lead, but difficult to drive; easy to govern, but impossible to enslave."
— Henry Peter (1778-1868), Scottish politician

"The principle goal of education in the schools should be creating men and women who are capable of doing new things, not simply repeating what other generations have done."
— Jean Piaget (1896–1980), Swiss psychologist

"What sculpture is to a block of marble, education is to an human soul."
— Joseph Addison (1672–1719), British essayist

"Education is a weapon whose effects depend on who holds it in his hands and at whom it is aimed."
— Joseph Stalin (1879–1953), Russian political leader

activities

1. Imagine that you will work on a school project with a comic strip character from the newspaper. List five characters you’d most like to work with and five characters that would make bad partners. Discuss your choices with the class.

2. Look for a news story about a school issue: redistricting, teacher credentials, content, vouchers, overcrowding, etc. Is there enough information in the story to help you form an opinion on the issue? What questions do you have? Discuss how you could get more information.

3. Write a letter to the editor or an opinion column about a change you’d like to see at your school. Think about how to be persuasive without sounding whiny. Next, write a letter about something — or somebody — good at your school.

KEEPING UP WITH SCHOOLS

It’s no surprise that people argue about education. Parents are concerned about their kids, and taxpayers are concerned about the hundreds of billions of dollars spent for U.S. schools.

In fact, there’s probably an argument going on right now where you live. What’s the talk in your community?

School safety has been a huge concern after a dozen school shootings in the late 1990s. What has your school done to maximize student safety? Are students ever asked to give up personal freedoms in the name of safety?

Course content is often controversial. Everybody can agree on mathematic equations, but some parents object to certain books, movies or scientific theories. Others can’t agree on whether religious beliefs should be expressed within schools. Has your community debated any of these issues?

School vouchers is another hot topic. All citizens pay taxes for public schools, but some families choose private education. Some of those who have chosen private schools want their money back in the form of a voucher, or scholarship, to pay for tuition at a private school. Has your community entered this debate? How would vouchers affect the quality of public schools?