

Hedy Lamarr: A Brilliant Mind Behind a Glamorous Mask

Senior Group Website Division

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Topic Selection:

We chose Hedy Lamarr for our topic early on in the season. As women interested in STEM and powerful women in history, we were in awe of her story and achievements. She was more than just Hollywood's most beautiful actress. She was also the pioneer behind a revolutionary communication system, whose principles are still used in modern technology. Hedy Lamarr was both interesting to us and relevant to the theme, making her the perfect choice for our topic.

Research:

To begin researching, we took to library databases to get background on Hedy Lamarr and her work in communication technology. Our next step was to find primary sources. Due to COVID restrictions, we had limited access to the public library, so most of our research was online. We first ordered *Ecstasy and Me: My Life as a Woman*, which claimed to be her autobiography. We soon figured out, however, that it was ghostwritten and Lamarr herself disagreed with much of the content. The biography provided insight into her personal life and public image with some direct quotes, but was largely uninformative. Next, we explored a recent biographical documentary from BBC, *Bombshell: The Hedy Lamarr Story*, that included primary source material, including one of her last interviews with Forbes. This was easily our most successful source, as it provided the most primary source material, including tapes of her speaking, interviews with family, and expert opinions on her work. We were initially disheartened by her autobiography being stripped of her voice, but the documentary was rich with her narrative. Our audio samples and many photographs are from the documentary. We found other images on Britannica ImageQuest, online archives, and news articles. These primary sources enhanced our project by providing insight into Lamarr's full story.

Website Building:

For our presentation category, we originally wanted to create an exhibit as one of us had in the past, but with COVID case numbers reaching record heights, we opted for a medium that could be worked on remotely. Both of us enjoy computer science and coding, so we decided working collaboratively on a website would be the best medium for us. This was both of our first years doing a website and one of our first years competing. We discovered that we enjoyed working with the software, and it was easy to work together on Zoom and delegate work between us.

Relation to the Theme of Communication: The Key to Understanding:

Without Hedy Lamarr's invention of frequency hopping, a method of spread spectrum technology, many modern means of communication, including WiFi, Bluetooth, GPS, and cell phones, would not exist. Lamarr's invention not only changed our personal lives, but also communication in warfare. The invention was originally for WWII torpedoes, and revolutionized

naval communication when her system was finally implemented. Additionally, she was an inspiration to women. Her acting career made strides for the perception of Hollywood actresses, proving they could be more than just beautiful. Lamarr's inventions and work in Hollywood played a key role in influencing the communication of today, which ultimately brings us closer to understanding one another.