AUTOMOTIVE

Who Killed The Electric Car Worksheet

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Introduction: Why We Still Ask Who Killed the Electric Car

In 2006, a documentary titled *Who Killed the Electric Car?* shook the automotive world and ignited a debate that continues to this day. The film chronicled the rise and mysterious disappearance of the General Motors EV1, a battery-electric vehicle that was leased to consumers in California in the late 1990s, only to be recalled and crushed by the manufacturer. For educators, students, and environmentally conscious viewers, the documentary is a powerful case study in innovation, corporate strategy, government policy, and consumer behavior. A **Who Killed The Electric Car Worksheet** is often used in classrooms to help students dissect the film's arguments, evaluate the evidence, and form their own conclusions about what really happened to the electric car.

Understanding the context of the worksheet means understanding the documentary itself. The film presents a compelling mystery: if the EV1 was a technological marvel that people loved driving, why did it disappear? The documentary examines several potential culprits, including the oil industry, car manufacturers, battery technology limitations, government regulations, and even consumer apathy. A well-designed worksheet guides students through these complex layers, prompting critical thinking about the intersection of technology, business, and environmental policy. This article explores the key components of such a worksheet, the lessons it teaches, and why the story remains relevant in the age of Tesla, Rivian, and the global push for electrification.

What Is a Who Killed The Electric Car Worksheet?

A **Who Killed The Electric Car Worksheet** is an educational resource typically designed for high school or college-level courses in environmental science, social studies, economics, or media literacy. The worksheet is used in conjunction with the documentary to help students analyze the film's narrative structure, evaluate the credibility of its sources, and engage with the central question of who or what was responsible for the death of the electric car. These worksheets often include pre-viewing questions, during-viewing note-taking prompts, and post-viewing discussion topics that encourage students to synthesize information and form evidence-based arguments.

Most worksheets are structured to break down the documentary into manageable segments. For example, students might be asked to list the "suspects" presented in the film, note the evidence against each one, and then weigh the relative importance of each factor. Common suspects include the oil industry, which allegedly lobbied against electric vehicle infrastructure; General Motors itself, which may have seen the EV1 as a threat to its profitable gasoline vehicle lineup; battery technology, which at the time offered limited range; and California's zero-emission vehicle mandate, which was later weakened under pressure. By completing the worksheet, students learn to approach complex issues with a structured analytical framework.

Key Themes Explored in the Worksheet

The Innovation Dilemma

One of the central themes of the documentary, and therefore of any **Who Killed The Electric Car Worksheet**, is the challenge of disruptive innovation. The EV1 was ahead of its time, but it threatened established business models. Automakers were reluctant to invest in electric vehicle production because it required retooling factories, training technicians, and developing a new supply chain. The worksheet often asks students to consider why a company would deliberately kill a successful product. This leads to discussions about the difference between technological success and market success, and how incumbents often resist change that could cannibalize their existing revenue streams.

Students are encouraged to think about the role of patents, intellectual property, and corporate strategy. Did General Motors suppress the EV1 because it wanted to protect its investment in hydrogen fuel cell technology, as some have alleged? Or was it simply a matter of economics, with the EV1 costing far more to produce than consumers were willing to pay? The worksheet helps students weigh these competing explanations and recognize that the truth is rarely simple.

The Role of Policy and Regulation

Another major theme is the influence of government policy on technology adoption. The documentary highlights California's Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) mandate, which required automakers to produce a certain number of emission-free vehicles. This mandate was a key driver of the EV1's development. However, the mandate was later weakened after legal challenges from automakers and pressure from the federal government. The worksheet typically asks students to evaluate the effectiveness of government mandates. Are they necessary to drive innovation, or do they create market distortions? This question is especially relevant today as governments around the world implement policies to encourage electric vehicle adoption, including tax credits, rebates, and bans on new gasoline car sales.

The worksheet also prompts students to consider the role of the oil industry. The documentary suggests that oil companies had a vested interest in preventing the widespread adoption of electric vehicles, which would reduce demand for gasoline. Students are asked to analyze the evidence presented in the film and consider whether it is convincing. This encourages critical thinking about media bias, the use of anecdotal evidence, and the difference between correlation and causation.

Consumer Behavior and Public Perception

The documentary also points a finger at consumers themselves. Despite the EV1's popularity among its lessees, the general public was largely unaware of the vehicle's existence. Automakers did little to market electric cars, and consumers were hesitant to embrace a new technology that required learning new habits, like plugging in the car overnight. The worksheet often includes questions about consumer psychology. Why are people resistant to change? What role does infrastructure play in adoption? How can companies and governments overcome consumer hesitancy? These questions are timeless and apply not only to electric vehicles but to any new technology that requires behavioral change.

Students are also asked to reflect on the role of media. The documentary itself is a piece of media making an argument. The worksheet encourages students to evaluate the film's techniques, such as interviews with experts, emotional appeals, and the use of archival footage. By analyzing the documentary as a persuasive text, students develop media literacy skills that are valuable in an age of information overload.

How to Use a Who Killed The Electric Car Worksheet Effectively

Educators who use a **Who Killed The Electric Car Worksheet** in their classrooms should consider how to maximize its impact. The worksheet should not be treated as a simple comprehension check but as a tool for deeper engagement. Pre-viewing activities might include a class discussion about what students already know

about electric vehicles, or a brainstorming session about the factors that influence technology adoption. During the viewing, students can fill out a graphic organizer that asks them to identify the different "suspects" and the evidence for and against each one.

Post-viewing activities are where the real learning happens. Students can participate in a mock trial where they argue for or against a particular suspect. They can write persuasive essays explaining who they believe is most responsible for the death of the electric car. They can research current electric vehicle models and compare them to the EV1, evaluating how far the technology has come. The worksheet can also be a springboard for broader discussions about sustainability, corporate responsibility, and the role of government in shaping markets.

For students who are especially engaged, the worksheet can lead to independent research projects. They might investigate the history of electric vehicles from the early days of the automobile to the present. They might explore the business models of electric vehicle startups like Tesla, or study the environmental impact of battery production and disposal. The documentary and the worksheet together form a rich foundation for extended learning.

Modern Relevance: Why the Worksheet Matters Today

It might be tempting to view the story of the EV1 as a historical curiosity, but the lessons of the documentary and the **Who Killed The Electric Car Worksheet** are more relevant than ever. In 2025, electric vehicles are no longer a niche product. Major automakers have announced plans to phase out internal combustion engines entirely, and governments around the world are setting ambitious targets for electric vehicle adoption. Yet many of the same challenges persist. Battery technology, while greatly improved, still faces issues of cost, range, and raw material sourcing. Charging infrastructure remains unevenly distributed. Consumer resistance, although diminished, still exists.

The worksheet prompts students to ask whether we are repeating the mistakes of the past. Are automakers truly committed to electric vehicles, or are they merely responding to regulatory pressure? Are we investing enough in charging infrastructure and grid modernization? Are we considering the environmental and social costs of battery production, including mining for lithium, cobalt, and nickel? By grappling with these questions, students develop a nuanced understanding of the transition to sustainable transportation.

Furthermore, the story of the EV1 is a cautionary tale about the dangers of monopolistic behavior and the importance of open competition. The documentary suggests that the electric car was killed not by market forces but by a coordinated effort to suppress a promising technology. Whether or not one accepts this interpretation, the film raises important questions about the power of corporations to shape our technological future. The worksheet encourages students to think critically about who benefits from technological change and who loses.

Sample Worksheet Questions and Activities

While the specific content of a **Who Killed The Electric Car Worksheet** varies by educator, certain types of questions are common. Here are some examples that illustrate the depth and breadth of the learning experience:

- Pre-viewing: What do you know about the history of electric vehicles? What factors do you think influence whether a new technology succeeds or fails in the market?
- During viewing: List the main suspects presented in the documentary. For each suspect, write down the evidence for and against their guilt.
- Post-viewing: Who do you believe is most responsible for the death of the electric car? Write a paragraph explaining your reasoning, citing specific evidence from the film.
- Extension activity: Research a current electric vehicle company, such as Tesla, Rivian, or Lucid. Compare

their business model and strategy to that of General Motors in the 1990s. What is different? What is the same?

- Debate: Should the government mandate the production of electric vehicles, or should the market be left to decide? Prepare arguments for both sides and participate in a class debate.

These questions are designed to be open-ended and to encourage multiple perspectives. There is no single right answer to the question of who killed the electric car, and the worksheet should reflect that complexity. The goal is not to reach a verdict but to think critically about the interplay of technology, business, politics, and culture.

Conclusion: Learning from the Past to Shape the Future

The **Who Killed The Electric Car Worksheet** is far more than a simple classroom exercise. It is a gateway to understanding one of the most important technological transitions of our time. By analyzing the documentary and engaging with its central questions, students develop critical thinking skills that will serve them well in an increasingly complex world. The story of the EV1 is a reminder that technology does not exist in a vacuum. It is shaped by corporate interests, government policies, and consumer choices. The worksheet encourages students to recognize their own role in this dynamic and to think about how they can contribute to a more sustainable future.

As electric vehicles become more common, the lessons of the documentary become even more urgent. The question of who killed the electric car has evolved into a broader question: Who is responsible for ensuring that the electric car lives and thrives this time? The answer, as the worksheet helps students discover, is all of us. By learning from the mistakes of the past, we can build a transportation system that is cleaner, smarter, and more equitable. The worksheet is a small but powerful tool for achieving that goal.

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