



VISIONARY OR MADMAN?

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Nikola Tesla has come to be seen by many as a tragic figure, a visionary engineer who died impoverished and largely forgotten—eclipsed by names such as Edison and Marconi. A tireless inventor who registered numerous patents and developed many working prototypes, Tesla would become most famous for his dazzling demonstrations. Audiences flocked to see him send thousands of volts of electricity pulsing through his body, dazzled by the spectacle of the inventor seemingly on fire. Even more read about his claims of receiving signals from outer space and his plans for using the earth's natural charge to distribute free electricity.

Tesla, the strange wizard and mad scientist, overtook Tesla the brilliant engineer—the seer of the wireless world we now live in. Lost in the spectacular rise and fall was the real man, a consummate inventor and dedicated engineer. His downfall is only partially explained by ideas that ricocheted from tangible inventions to projections of a future with head-spinning possibilities. However, it was his technology that helped drive the electrical age in the 20th century, and his vision that imagined the wireless world of the 21st century. In *Tesla*, AMERICAN EXPERIENCE chronicles the life of a man whose ideas revolutionized his time, and ours.

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CREDITS

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