

An internal combustion engine

It's hard to believe, but steam was also used to power automobiles. In France, around the end of the 19th century, a steam-powered vehicle was invented by Amédée Bollée. This light steam car carried up to 12 people and moved at almost 60 kilometers per hour. Before World War I, the steam car was the most popular kind of car available. It was fast and quiet, too.

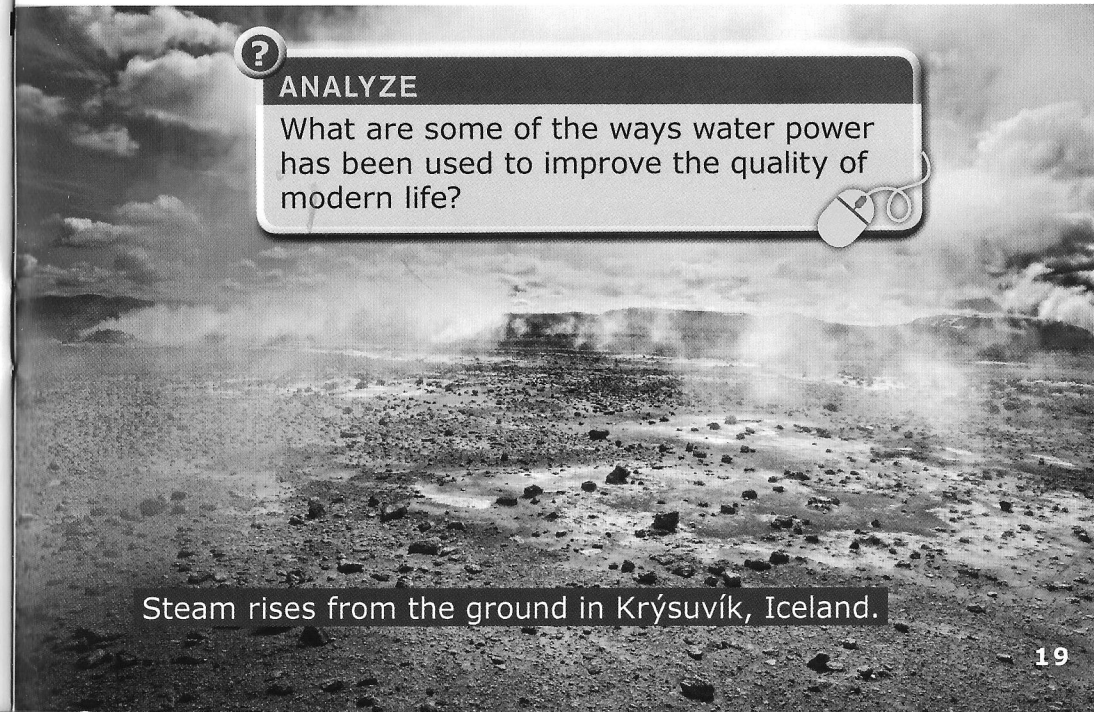
At the very same time, another kind of engine, the internal combustion engine, was being developed and perfected. By 1920, the steam engine and the steam car were considered old-fashioned. The internal combustion engine, driven by oil, had won the battle to power the automobile. The steam car was dead!

Steam is still used in our homes, though. We use steam-powered machines to clean carpets, to wash dishes, to cook food, and to heat our homes. Steam baths are very popular, too, especially in places like Finland and Japan.

While steam may no longer be considered a useful way to power industry, trains, or automobiles, it may still be an important source of energy if we can think of how to use it more efficiently. These days, we are all very concerned about the negative effects of non-renewable energy forms such as oil and gas on our environment. Steam is now being looked at as a potential renewable resource – in the form of geothermal energy.

Geothermal energy is energy which comes from heat generated deep inside the Earth. This source of power is popular in places where there is a lot of geothermal activity, like Iceland.

By using our power of invention, in places where steam is naturally available, we can find ways to use it to provide the energy power we need.



ANALYZE

What are some of the ways water power has been used to improve the quality of modern life?

Steam rises from the ground in Krýsuvík, Iceland.