American Culture Shen Name: ____

Television in the 1970s: "All in the Family"

I. "<u>Sitcom</u>" = Situation + Comedy (DEFINE)

II. All in the Family was a new kind of sitcom in the early 1970s.

- a. Involved the same cast of characters who week-to-week encountered comedic situations
- b. BUT it ALSO introduced social realism and controversy to sitcoms
 - i. MEANING WHAT? It was popular with audiences AND it helped to start a national conversation about poverty, racism, sexism, religious bias and politics through a half-hour comedy.
 - ii. EXAMPLE:

All in the Family
Topic(s):
What's funny about the clip(s)?

III. What was TV like before *All in the Family*? What kinds of ESCAPIST shows were on in the 1960s? (LIST a few exs.)

- IV. All in the Family's Goal:
 - a. What was Norman Lear's goal in creating All in the Family?
 - b. <u>Social Realism</u>: addressing social issues & family relationships all while also showing real world problems

V. Breaking Rules

a. The show broke many of primetime's previously unbreakable taboos – HOW SO? (Give 1-2 examples)

VI. Reaction

- a. Immediate reaction from tv writers & critics was mixed.
- b. How did audiences react to the show?

VII. Cast of Characters

a. The show was framed around a generational gap - between old/young

The older generation	The younger generation
Archie:	<u>Gloria</u> :
<u>Edith</u> :	<u>Mike</u> :

EPISODE: "Sammy's Visit"

What does the episode say about the following values/issues?

Starring Sammy Davis, Jr.

- the "greatest living entertainer in the world" (he sang, danced, played instruments, acted, did stand-up)
- helped break down racial barriers in show business in the 1950s and 1960s
- famous as one of the "Rat Pack", a group of entertainers that included Dean Martin and Frank Sinatra

	Archie/Edith	Gloria/Mike/Lionel	
How would you describe their beliefs/ideas on race?			
What role do the women in the house play?			
What do you notice about their social class?		I	
How could you make the case that this is an example of the generation gap?			
What makes this show/episode an example of social realism?			

a. APPLY THIS TO ARCHIE: What made Archie the classic anti-hero?

b. What are 2 modern examples of anti-heroes on tv?

IX. Critics

- a. An article in *The New York Times* argued that the show had made Archie into a flattering mirror for bigots
- b. Critics' concerns: bigoted viewers identified with Archie's perspective, and "perhaps most disturbing, saw nothing wrong with Archie's use of racial and ethnic slurs."

X. Impact / Legacy

- a. Archie became an American tv icon.
- b. The show became the focus of a heated national debate on whether comedy was an appropriate way to speak out against prejudice and social inequality.
- c. The show ushered in a new generation of comedic programs which focused on themes of important social significance.

XI. Spin-offs

- a. The Jeffersons ("movin' on up to the East Side...")
- b. Maude