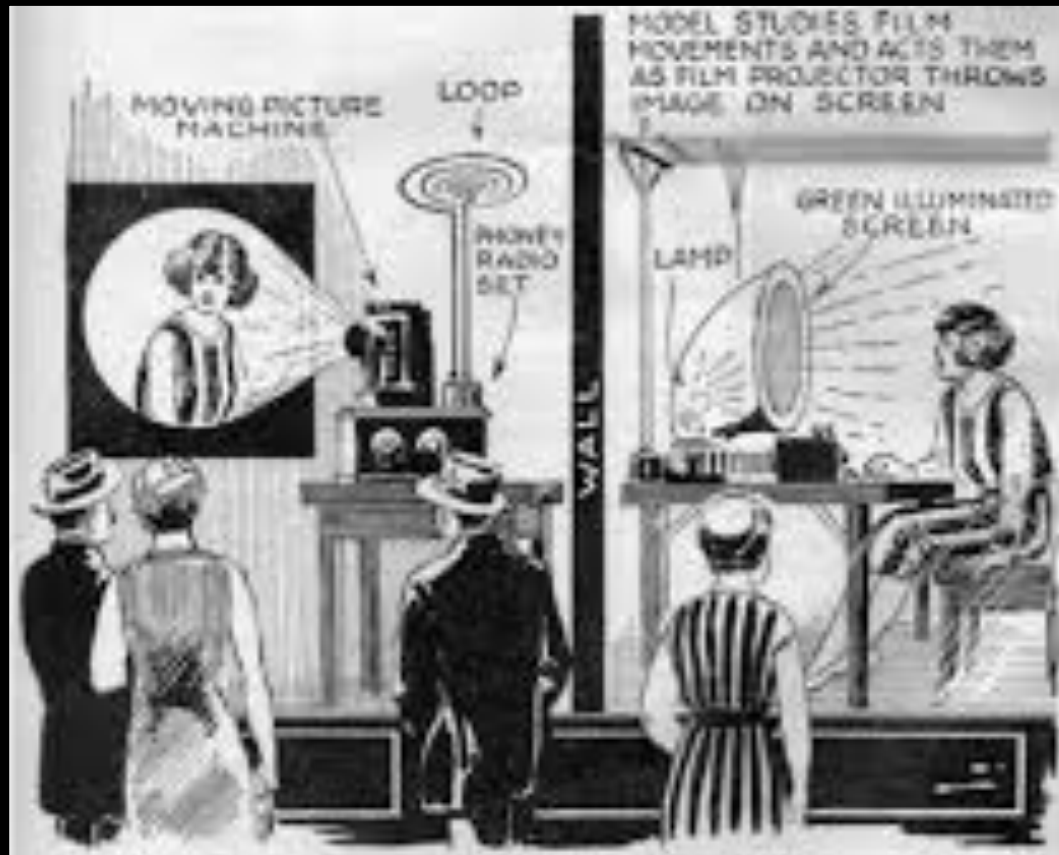


History of  
**Television**



# Television = Film + Radio



“ I thought they were pulling my leg when they said that one of these days, pictures are going to be flying through the air – you’ll be able to see radio.”

- HAL KANTER, Comedy Writer

# Television in the 1930s

- Early television was designed and controlled by businesses.
- In the 1930s, RCA tested tv in *factories*, hoping to improve workers' efficiency by monitoring workers on the job.



## Remember *Modern Times*?

How do you think workers felt about television?



# Television in the 1930s



- In 1939, RCA demonstrated the television at the New York World's Fair to try to increase interest in the tv.
  - Most people said they didn't think they'd ever want a tv set in their homes.

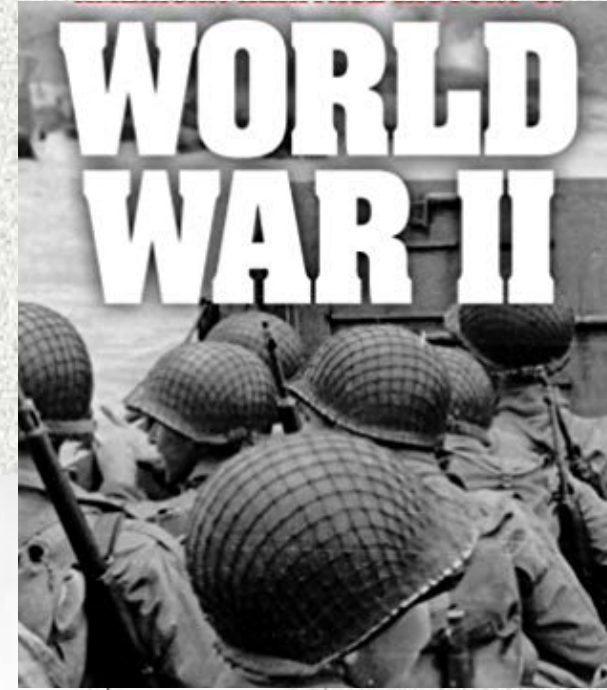
Radio was the big thing in the 1910s-1930s. Radio continued to thrive during the 1930s & 1940s.



THINK: Why did people not want to switch from radio to tv?

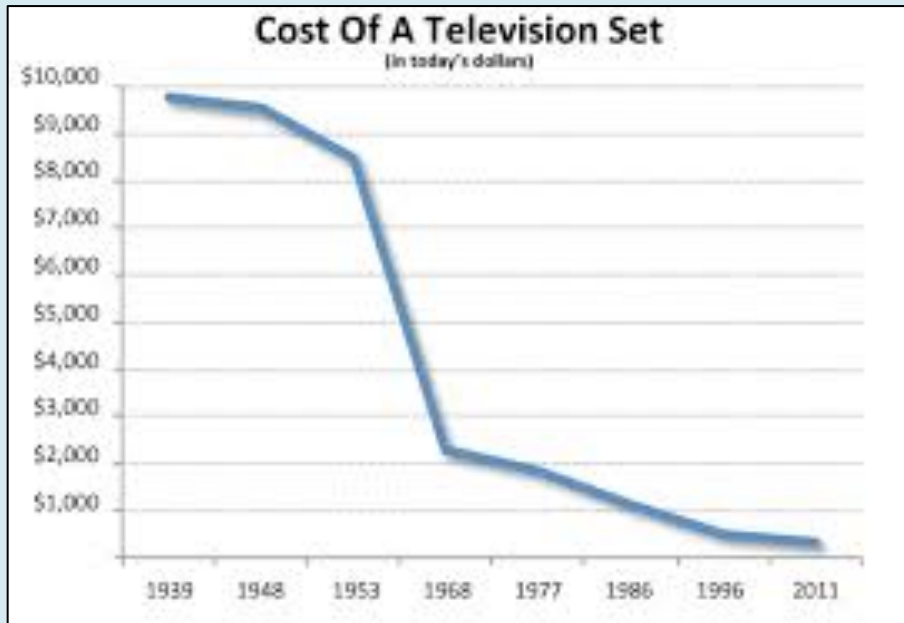


THE GREAT DEPRESSION



# After WWII (1945), the era of TV began.

- TV sets went on sale to the public in 1946.
- TV got off to slow start though. Why?
  - *They were expensive!*
    - A small black and white set cost \$200, a console \$2500. (FYI: The median income in the United States was \$3000.)
  - *Parts of the country had either just one or no stations.* (Not worth buying a tv for one channel!)

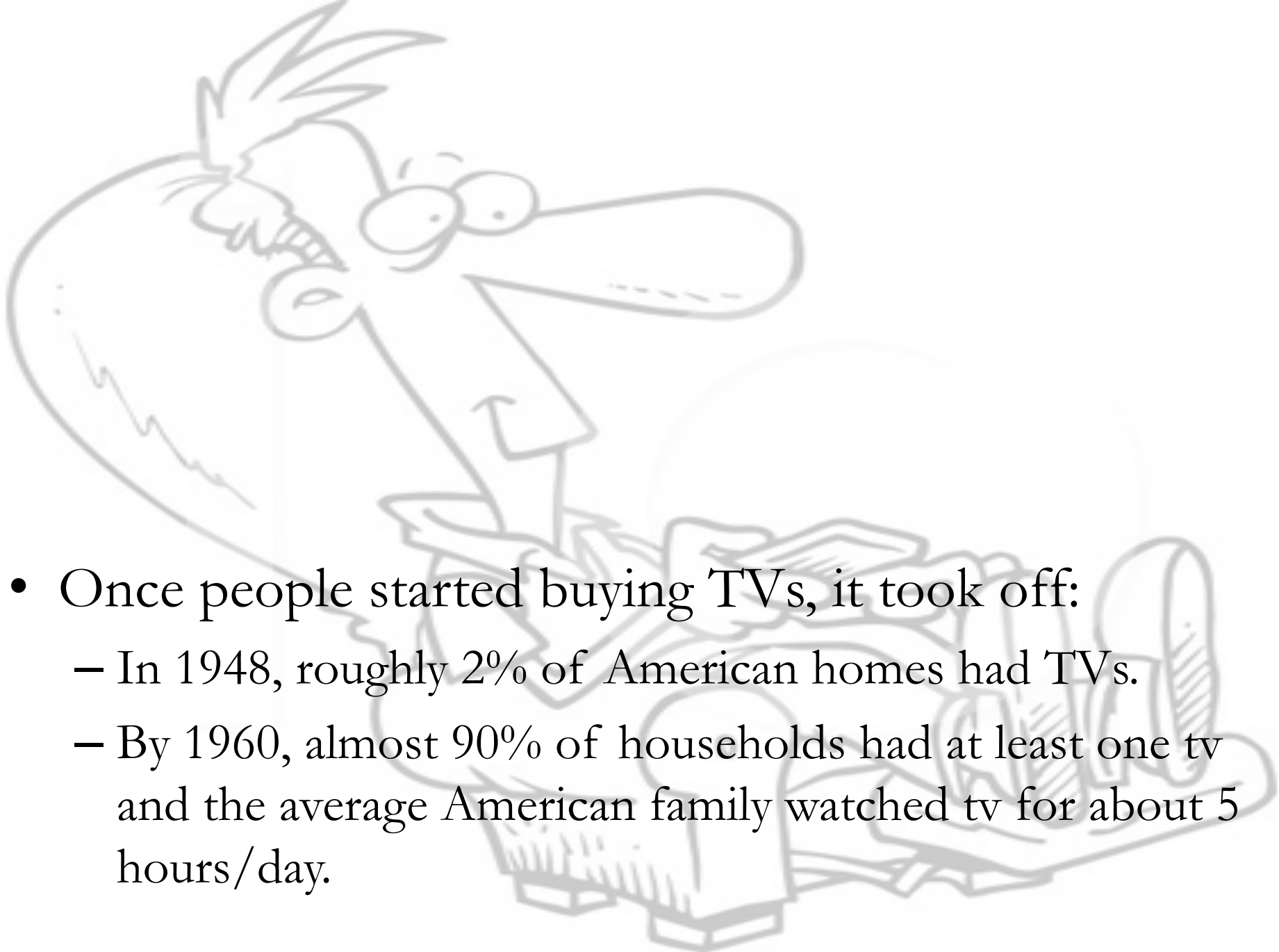




- By 1948, the networks (ABC, CBS, and NBC) were offering a full schedule of prime-time shows (8-10pm.)
- By the 1950s, the networks were looking at how to fill the daytime slots. (Bring on the soap operas!)





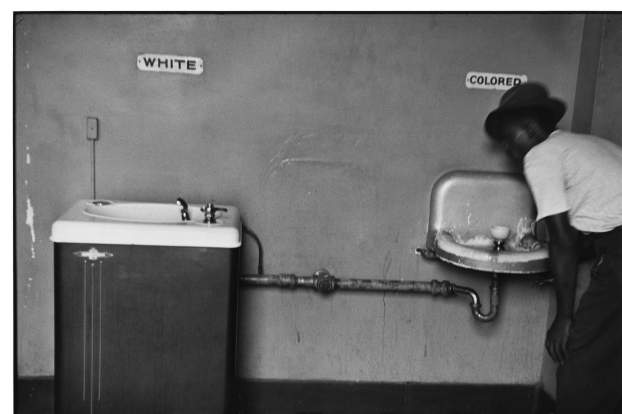


- Once people started buying TVs, it took off:
  - In 1948, roughly 2% of American homes had TVs.
  - By 1960, almost 90% of households had at least one tv and the average American family watched tv for about 5 hours/day.

# TV in the 1950s – The Golden Age of Television

- TV was very popular in the 1950s (so much so it was called the “Golden Age,” meaning the peak of tv popularity.)
  - By the end of the 1950s, TV was the main form of entertainment and information.
  - In the '50s, more TV sets (70 million) were sold than children born (40 million).
  - In 1952 there were 108 TV stations. By 1962 there were 541 TV stations. (Today there are about 1,600 stations in the U.S. plus streaming options.)
- What did TV look like in the 1950s?
  - Shows included news, sports, game shows, sitcoms, children’s shows, variety shows and dramas.
  - Most shows were filmed live and were not recorded/reaired.
  - The big three networks – ABC, CBS and NBC – dominated programming.

# What was happening in United States in the 1950s?



# Television's Appeal in the 1950s



- In the '50s, TV was a cheap and easy form of entertainment for families living in the suburbs.
  - Offered something for everyone in the family (news, comedy shows, sitcoms, cartoons, etc.)

# TV's Appeal in the 1950s - Adults

- Like a date for the married couple:
  - TV didn't require a babysitter, commute into the city and parking (movie theater attendance dropped at the same time.)
  - Could sit on the couch with your spouse and watch a show at home!
- Sold the idea to housewives as being like a romantic night on the town. NBC advertised its evening lineup in women's magazines – told women to “make a date to see the greatest theater in the world.”





APPLAUSE

- 1950s tv was like being at a live show:
  - Early tv shows were often made up of a mix of live performances. Like a nightclub – comedians, animal acts, tumblers, etc. – and all had a live studio audience.
  - **EXAMPLE:** Texaco Star Theater (NBC, 1948-1953)

EVERY WEDNESDAY NIGHT

# THE TEXACO STAR THEATRE

## 2

GREAT SHOWS IN ONE

**1. A GREAT VARIETY SHOW**  
30 MINUTES . . . FROM HOLLYWOOD!  
WITH  
Kenny BAKER • Frances LANGFORD  
David BROEKMAN'S Orchestra  
Jimmie WALLINGTON  
AND  
Ken MURRAY, Master of Ceremonies

**2. A GREAT DRAMATIC SHOW**  
30 MINUTES . . . FROM NEW YORK!  
Each Week—HIT PLAYS . . .  
written by the world's fore-  
most playwrights!  
FAMOUS STARS . . .  
playing brilliant roles!

**WJAS**  
9 to 10  
P.M., EST

PRESENTED BY  
**TEXACO**  
DEALERS









# TV's Appeal in the 1950s - Families



- The American Dream: middle-class life, home in the suburbs with a yard, new car, perfect family (husband, wife, 2 kids)
  - Middle class life: thanks to rising income and economic growth, 60% of Americans were in the middle class & could afford to buy a new home/car.
  - Family: after the war, returning veterans marry & start families. (Baby boom: time after WWII when there was a large increase in the number of children born each year)

# Sitcom Families



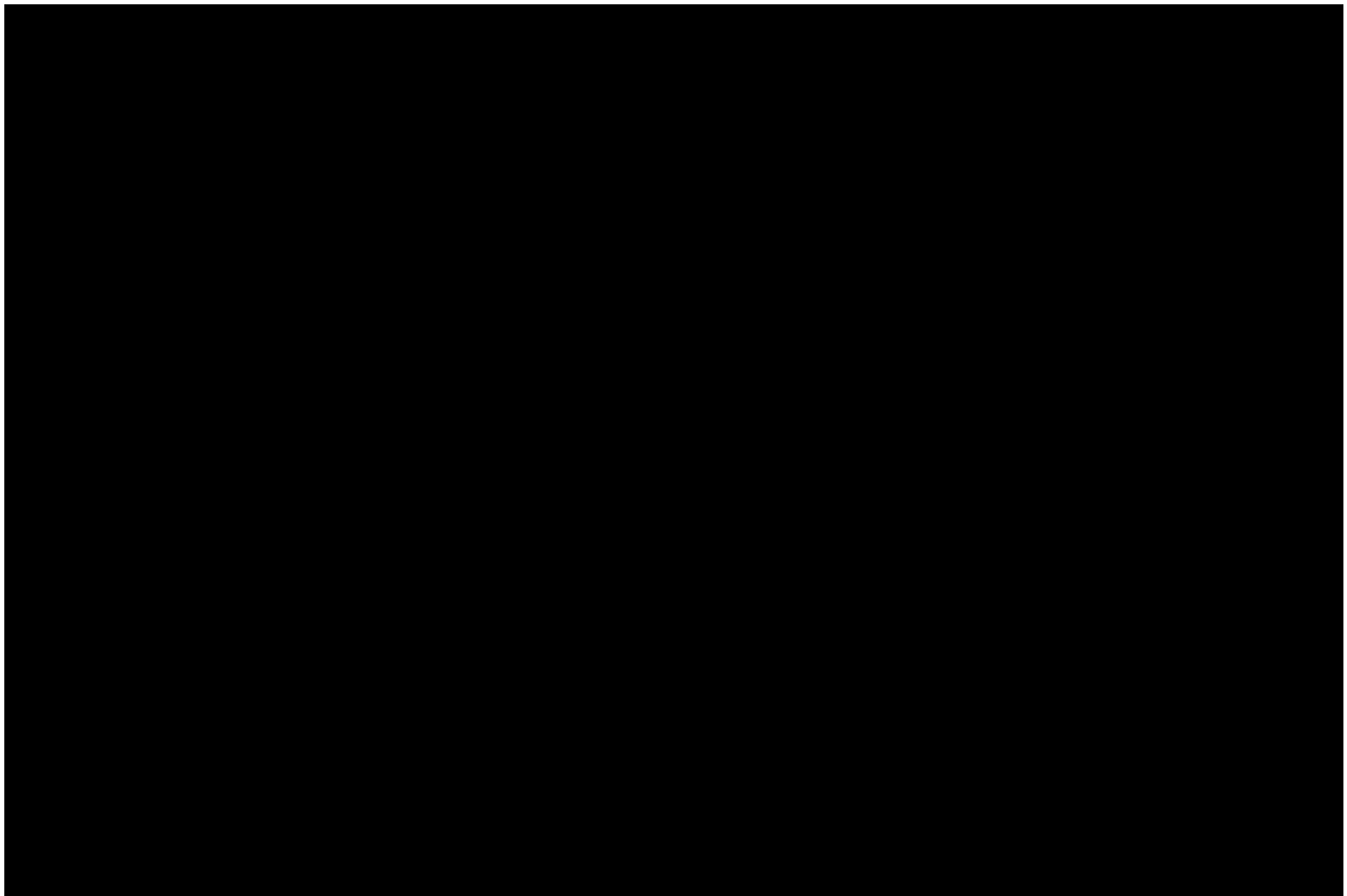
Leave it to Beaver



Father Knows Best

- TV sitcoms mirrored the lives of the white middle class.
  - Segregated (whites & blacks separated)
  - Suburban, family focused
  - Conservative

*Leave it to Beaver*



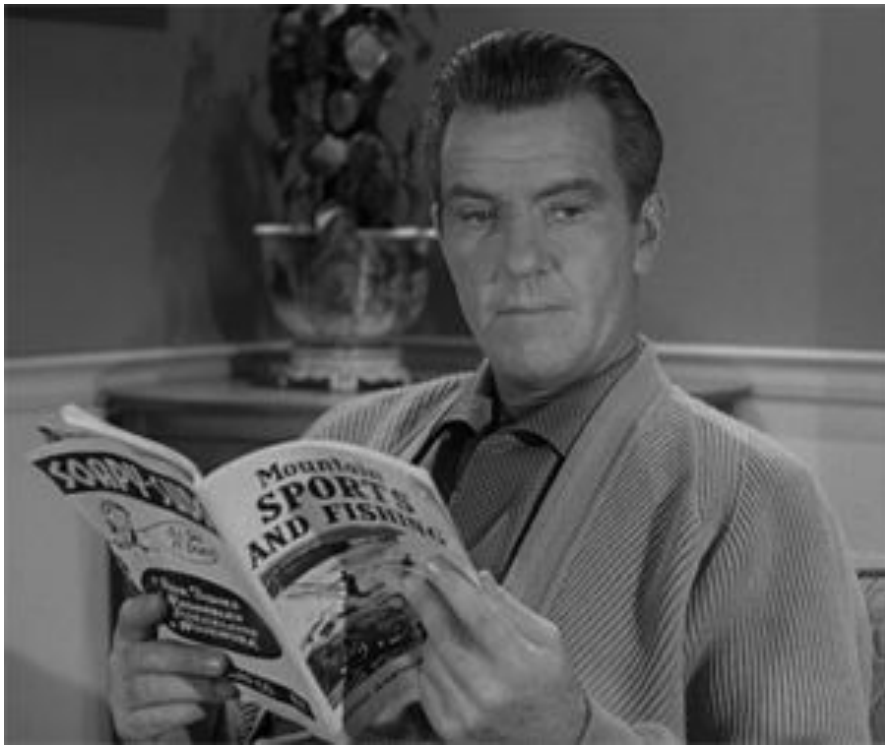
# I Love Lucy (1951-1957)



- Went on the air in 1951 and was the most watched show in the U.S. for 4 of the 6 years it aired.
  - A record-breaking 71% of American televisions were tuned in the night Lucy gave birth (more people than had watched Dwight D. Eisenhower get sworn in as President the following day.)
- Starred Lucy & Desi Arnaz as a married couple.
  - Lucy was a housewife who longed for a career in show business. Her husband, Ricky, worked as an entertainer at a nightclub.
  - Despite Lucy's lack of talent and Ricky's belief that a woman's place was in the home, Lucy dreamed of a life outside the home and concocted hilarious (and doomed) schemes to get out of the kitchen and into the limelight.

# What was expected of men & women in the 1950s?

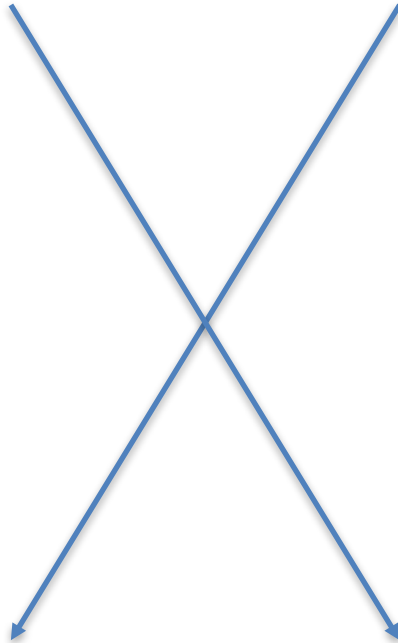
## 1950s Men



## 1950s Women



# I Love Lucy, “Job Switching”



# I Love Lucy, “Job Switching”

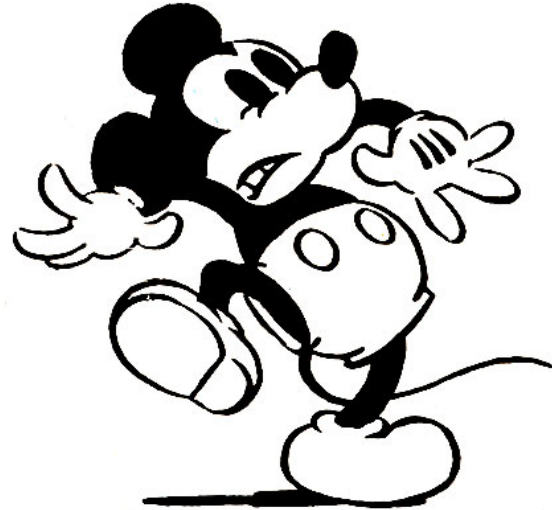
1. Why do the women, Lucy and Ethel, want to get a job?
2. How do the men, Ricky and Frank, react at first when they accept the challenge to stay home? What are their attitudes to what their wives do at home?
3. What kinds of jobs are offered to the women at the employment office?
4. What problems do the men have as they complete household chores?
5. How does the episode support traditional gender roles?







# TV's Appeal in the 1950s - Kids



- In 1954, ABC partnered with Disney, which was interested in using TV to promote its films and new theme park in southern CA.
  - *Disneyland* was launched in 1954
  - *The Mickey Mouse Club* in 1955

*The Mickey Mouse Club's  
Original Mouseketeers*



# TV's Influence on Society



A Danger to Youth?

# Dangers of TV in the 1950s



- By the early 1950s, social scientists, religious groups, parents, teachers and govt. officials all began expressing concerns about tv's effect on the public, especially children.
  - Congress began investigating radio & tv's effect on children
    - One senator complained that crime and adventure series showed *too much violence and immorality*
    - Argued tv *led to an increase in youth crime* in the '50s

# Critics of Television

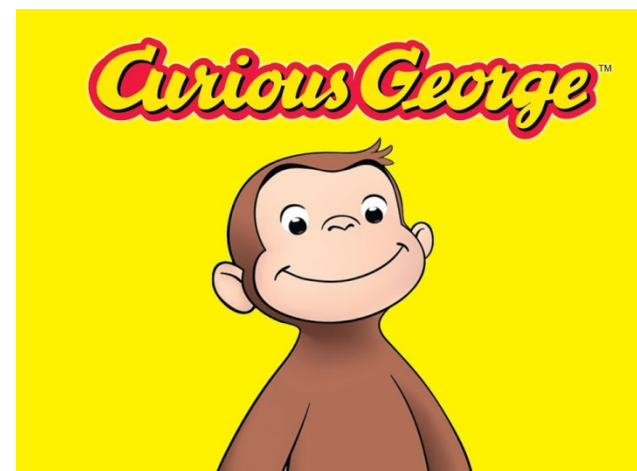
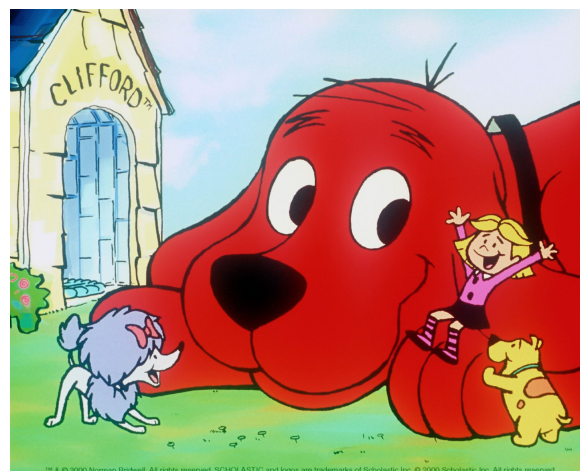
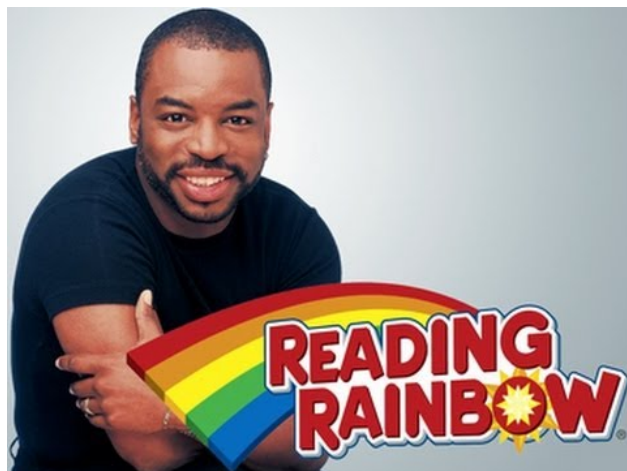
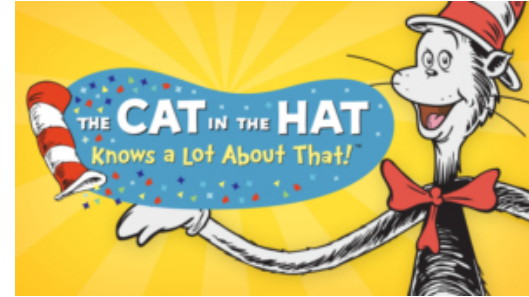
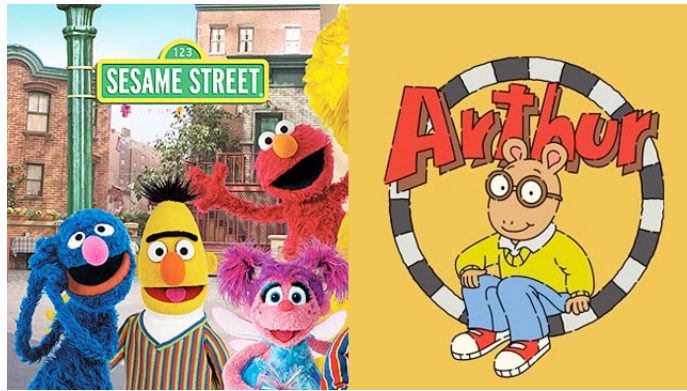
# One possible solution: TV Reform



- FCC commissioner Newton Minnow's complaints about tv serving up a “steady diet of sitcoms, game shows, and Westerns” instead of quality shows led to calls for reform.
- He called for the creation of educational channels. This led to federal support and the formation of the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) in 1969. PBS was designed to be an education and arts channel.



# What kinds of shows do you find on PBS?





# Bob Ross <sup>THE</sup> Joy of Painting



# Another solution? Censorship!

- In 1952, TV studios created an industry-wide censorship code that worked as a form of self-censorship (stayed in place until 1982.)
  - Similar to the Production Code used by the film industry



All married couples sleep in twin beds... totally normal, right?



The network said they couldn't say Lucy was "pregnant" because it was vulgar, instead she was "expecting."

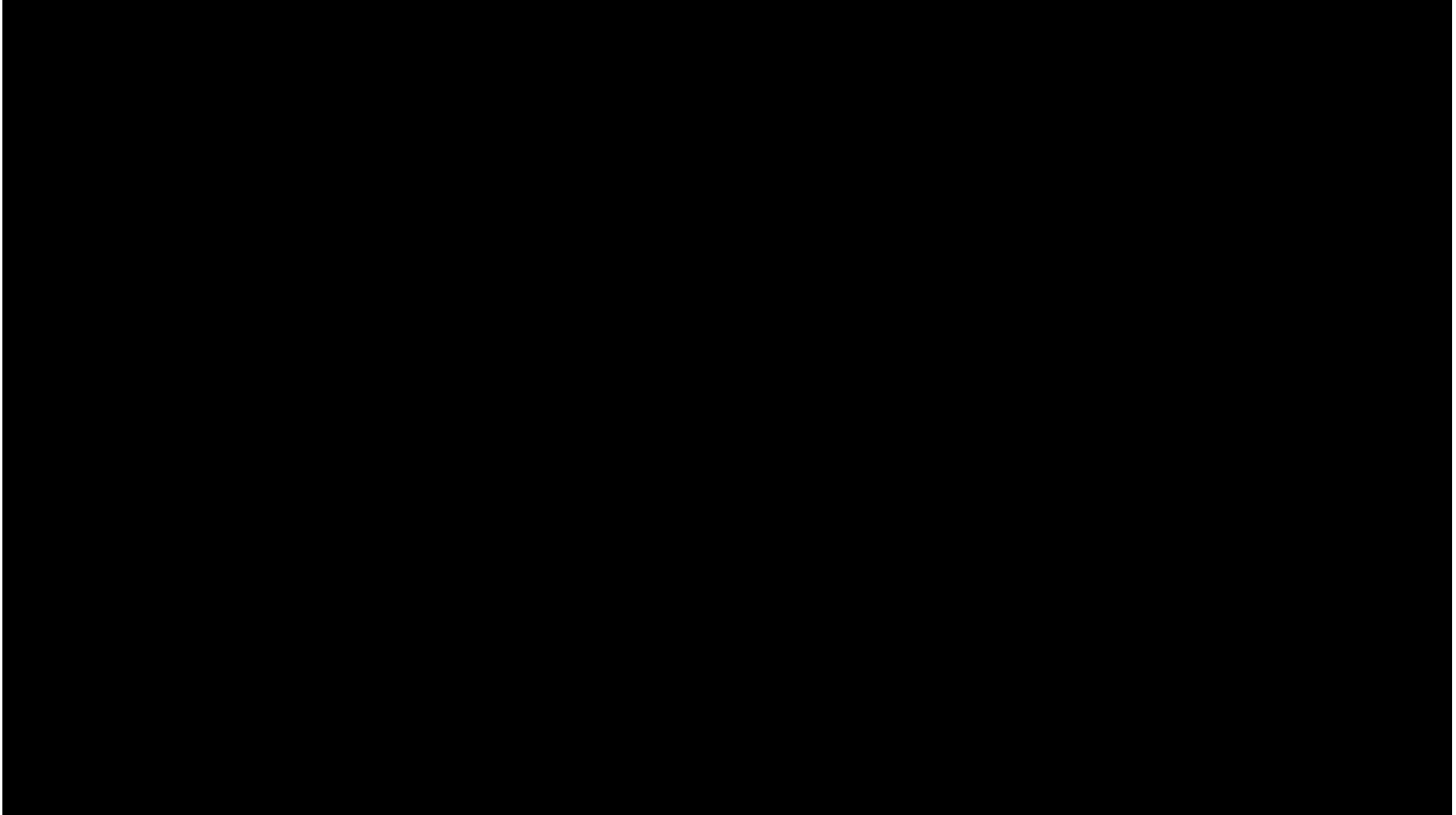


# *CNN The Sixties: Television Comes of Age*





# 1960s TV: Escapism



# 1960s TV: Realism



- Responding to criticism, the networks’
  - made their news shows longer (went from 10 ->30 minutes) and made documentaries that dealt with the serious social and political issues of the time.
  - shifted away from lighter topics and instead made shows that dealt with social issues (welfare, housing, divorce, racism)

# 1960s TV: Realism (News)

- President Kennedy began televising his press conferences.

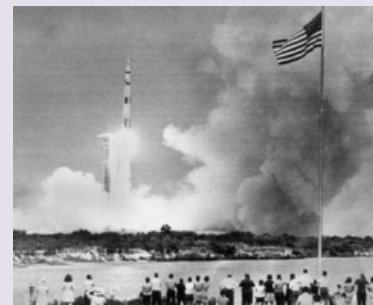


- Technology enhanced TV's ability to go "live" at the scene of important events



Reporters went into battle with America's troops – bringing the war into Americans' living room for the first time.

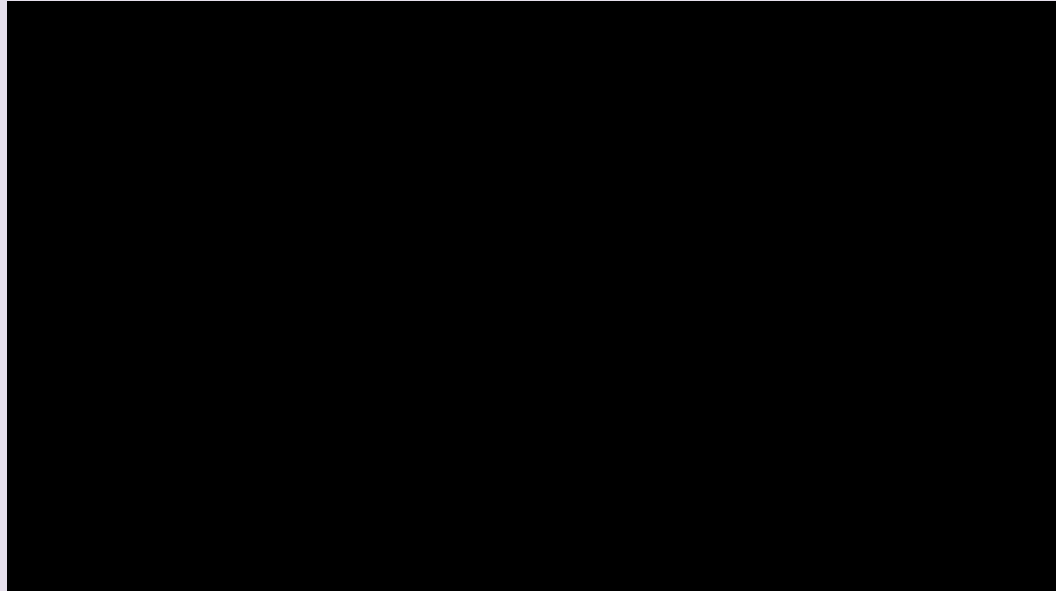
- Americans were presented nightly images of the war in Vietnam, anti-war protests, civil rights marches, etc.



The "space race" heated up and networks routinely covered each launch.



# 1960s TV: Realism (News)



- Video brought the realities & tensions of the world into Americans' homes for the first time.
- In 1963 President Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas.
  - Networks suspended their regular programming and commercials for four days.
  - An estimated 93% of American homes watched the president's funeral and burial.
- CBS anchor Walter Cronkite earned the title of “the most trusted man in America” for his unbiased, straightforward reporting.

# 1960s-1970s TV: Realism (Sitcoms)

- By the end of the 1960s, networks had shifted towards shows like:
  - *The Mod Squad* (1968-1973) – a youth centered police drama featuring 3 hippie cops and plots that addressed social issues of the day.
  - *All in the Family* (1971-1983) gave sitcoms a new sense of realism.
  - New woman sitcoms like:
    - *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* (1970-1977) showed working women living on their own and feminist issues.
    - *Maude* (1972-1978) was the first prime-time show with a divorced woman as the lead. She also became the first prime-time star to have an abortion (a plot that raised a lot of controversy for CBS.)



Late 1960s-1970s TV Realism:  
*All in the Family*

