

**History of Television Notes (1930s-1970s)**

**I. Television in the 1930s**

- a. Early television was designed and controlled by businesses.
  - i. 1930s RCA tested tv in \_\_\_\_\_.
  - ii. Remember the scene from “Modern Times”? How do you think workers felt about television?
    - iii. In 1939, RCA demonstrated the tv in a radio-tube-shaped pavilion at the New York World’s Fair to increase interest in the tv.
      - 1. It didn’t work. Most people said they didn’t think they’d ever want a tv in their home.
- b. Radio was the big thing in the 1910s-1930s. Radio continued to thrive in the 1930s and 1940s.
  - i. WHY did people NOT want to switch from radio to tv?

What was going on?	Why then did people NOT want tvs in this time?
1930s:	
1940s:	

**II. After WWII (1945) the era of tv began**

- a. TV sets went on sale in 1946.
- b. TV got off to a slow start. Why?

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

### III. TV in the 1950s - the Golden Age of Television

- a. Support the following statement: "TV was very popular in the 1950s."

- b. What did tv look like in the 1950s?

- c. What was happening in the U.S. in the 1950s?



- d. In the '50s, TV was a cheap and easy form of entertainment for families in the suburbs.
  - i. TV's Appeal - Adults
    - 1. How was tv like a date for married couples?

- 2. TV EXAMPLE: Texaco Star Theater (live variety show)

ii. TV's Appeal - Families

1. Describe the American Dream in the 1950s:

2. TV sitcoms mirrored the lives of the white middle class. HOW SO?

3. How does a show like **“Leave it to Beaver”** or “Father Knows Best” mirror the lives of the white middle class?

a. Where do they take place?

b. Who do we see on screen?

c. How do we know they're middle class?

4. **“I Love Lucy”** (1951-1957)

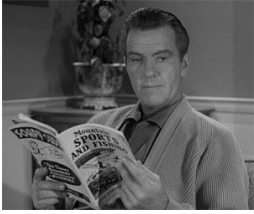
a. Went on the air in 1951 and was the most watched show in the U.S. for 4 of the 6 years it aired.



b. Starred Lucy & Desi Arnaz as a married couple.

- i. Lucy was a housewife who longed for a career in show business. Her husband, Ricky, worked as an entertainer at a nightclub.
- ii. 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?



Men:



Women:

### “I Love Lucy: Job Switching”

1. Why do the women, Lucy and Ethel, want to get a job?
2. How do the men, Ricky & 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?

iii. TV's appeal - Kids

1. In 1954, ABC partnered with Disney, which was interested in using TV to promote its films and new theme park in southern CA.

a. *Disneyland* was launched in 1954

b. *The Mickey Mouse Club* in 1955

e. TV's Influence on Society - A Danger to Youth?

<p><b>Concerns/worries &amp; complaints about tv:</b></p>	
<p><b>Actions taken to "fix" or clean up tv (reforms):</b></p>	<p>Creating educational channels (PBS) - what kind of shows? (LIST 2)</p> <p>Censorship - tv (like movies) started censoring themselves in the 1950s-1980s</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EX: The "I Love Lucy" show couldn't say the word "pregnant" because it was vulgar/inappropriate and married couples were always shown sleeping in twin beds instead of together</li> </ul>

**IV. Television in the 1960s**

a. Escapism (EX: Carol Burnett Show - dentist sketch)

i. How did a show like this help people ESCAPE from the seriousness of the 1960s?

