



The Cosby Show

- I. What was ***The Cosby Show*** about?
 - A. The show centered on an upper-middle class black family living in Brooklyn, NY.
 - 1. The family was headed by a doctor (Heathcliff) and lawyer (Claire) and their five children.
 - 2. They were living the American Dream on TV, starring a black family.
 - B. *The Cosby Show* dominated TV in the '80s and topped the ratings for five straight years.

II. Sitcom families

- A. Today's sitcom families are more diverse than they were in the 1950s-1970s.
- B. Think about the sitcom families we've studied so far.

		What do you notice about tv families in the 1950s & 1960s?
1950s: <i>Leave it to Beaver</i>		
1960s: <i>Bewitched</i>		

III. African-Americans on TV before *The Cosby Show*

- A. There were few African-Americans on TV before the 1970s & the few roles that existed were stereotypical
 - 1. How people are shown on TV matters because..
 - 2. When it came to race on TV, white, middle-class Americans didn't know enough about black society to know if a black character on TV was unrealistic or offensive.
 - 3. EXAMPLE: *Amos & Andy*
 - a) If this is one of the only examples of black people that exists on tv in the 1950s, what are white Americans going to learn about black Americans from this?

B. *Good Times*:

1. PLOT: Show centered on the Evans family, a working class family who lived in a Chicago housing project. The storylines dealt with the difficulties of urban life with humor.

How was this show an example of progress?	Why did people still criticize the show?

C. *The Jeffersons*

1. PLOT: George & Louise Jefferson (a laundromat entrepreneur), move from Archie Bunker's working-class neighborhood in Queens into a swanky high-rise building on the Upper East Side. The humor came from the family's adjustment to their new wealth.

How was this show an example of progress?	Why did people still criticize the show?

- D. Although roles for blacks on TV increased in the 1970s, there were still not a lot of TV shows for black audiences.

1. WHY?
 - a) TV networks thought that...

IV. *The Cosby Show*

- A. What set *The Cosby Show* apart from shows before it?

1. Instead of focusing on the working class, it was about...

B. Cosby's goals for show

1. _____

2. Wanted to make a show about a middle class black family who was not totally defined by their skin color.

WATCH EPISODE CLIPS:

#1 earring video:

How is this similar to something that might happen in any household between a parent & child?

#2 March on Washington video:

What are some parts of this video that might be more specific to an African-American family living in the United States?

WATCH PILOT EPISODE

1. What did you LIKE about this episode?
2. Given Cosby's goal to make a relatable family focused show, what are some examples from the episode that support this goal?

C. What was important about *The Cosby Show*?

1. Although the show was a comedy, Cosby used the show to talk about serious issues like...
2. It was praised for breaking racial stereotypes.
3. Cosby made an effort to incorporate characters in non-stereotypical roles

D. Critics of *The Cosby Show*

1. Why did some people criticize the show?

E. *The Cosby Show*'s success paved the way for a variety of black stories and casts on television shows.

F. Some argue it had a lasting impact on Americans racial views.