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Popular Culture in the American History Classroom: Using Television, Film, and Popular Music as Primary Source Documents

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**Popular Culture in the American History Classroom:
Using Television, Film, and Popular Music as Primary Source Documents**

by

Mary K. Maslanka
December, 2007

A thesis submitted to the Department of Education and Human Development of the State
University of New York College at Brockport in partial
Fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science in Education

**Popular Culture in the American History Classroom:
Using Television, Film, and Popular Music as Primary Source Documents**

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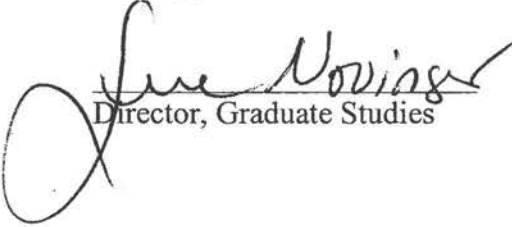
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**The American Situation Comedy
1950-2000**

by

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The mass media, specifically television, has mirrored the last fifty years of American history. Many historians will argue that television is in fact an agent of change in American history that pushed our culture onto the next social issue or fad. Although theories on socialization can be hard to validate, it is evident that television situation comedies are representative of the values, norms, and social issues of the era in which they were created. The first ten years of television programming focused on conformity and consensus at a time when the Cold War gave Americans a reason to fear what was different. By the 1960s, fictional characters began to represent changing gender roles and family structures. A decade later, television producers and writers began to use satire to incorporate social issues into situation comedies, disregarding the corporate sponsorship that controlled so much of production twenty years earlier. In the 1980s and 1990s American sitcoms dealt with changing values and began to push the boundaries of what was acceptable content for primetime television audiences. As we contemplate the spectrum of situation comedies that construct the past fifty years of television, we see the quintessence of American social history.

The Early Years: Emphasis on Conformity

In the 1950s and early 1960s, most of the families Americans saw on television every night were made up of a mother, father and children. The nuclear families depicted in sitcoms often lived middle-class lives among other white families in unambiguous suburban towns. Situation comedies such as *Father Knows Best* and *Leave it to Beaver* modeled the ideal family living in post-war America. Although most viewers would argue these characters were modeling real life families, the reality is that

“conventional” families were overrepresented in sitcoms over the first ten years of television.

In the 1950s, eighty percent of the families depicted on primetime television were nuclear families living a middle-class lifestyle.¹ The non-traditional families shown on television were almost always male-headed. In fact, fourteen percent of television families were headed by a single father (who was almost always a widower).² *My Little Margie*, one of the first sitcoms with this format, aired on CBS and NBC from 1952-55. However, this subgenre of single-dad sitcoms became increasingly popular toward the end of the decade as shows like *The Ed Wynn Show*, *My Three Sons*, and *The Andy Griffith Show*, among others, were put on the air. All of these fictional fathers were widowers. The 1960 census tells us, however, that just over one percent of families in the United States were headed by single dads.³ An additional discrepancy in these early sitcoms lies in the absence of parents running a family by themselves as a result of divorce.⁴ Although divorces were a reality during this era, network television consistently created situations in which these fathers and their children had been left without wives and mothers as a result of a tragic death, fearing that a divorced family would hurt the moral fabric of the program.

Although these misrepresentations demonstrate inconsistency between actual American family culture and fictional families depicted on situation comedies, it is worthwhile to investigate the basis for this contradiction. The inconsistency between the depiction of families and the reality experienced on the other side of the television

¹ Michael Morgan, Susan Leggett and James Shanahan. “Television and Family Values: Was Dan Quayle Right?” *Mass Communication and Society* 2, no. 1 /2 (1999): 48.

² *Ibid*, 48

³ *Ibid*, 48

⁴ *Ibid*, 48.

screen is not a result of out-of-touch writers or producers. Rather, the early situation comedies aimed to provide a favorable picture of American life. American society in the 1950s was overcome with the Cold War mentality in which Americans valued conformity and disparaged deviation to the standard American way.

The generation of Americans who fought in World War II and came home to start families were responsible for the growth of suburbia and the booming success of corporate America. Starting a family and contributing to capitalism through mass consumption was seen as a patriotic act. Writers and producers avoided upsetting subject matter. Corporate sponsors capitalized on this emphasis on conformity by using product placement in less than subtle ways. Products were advertised in ways that promoted conformity and consensus. In a June 1950 radio episode of *Father Knows Best*, the precursor to the popular television series, a Maxwell House commercial opened up the script:

Kathy: *Mother! Is Maxwell House really the only coffee in the world?*

Margaret: *Well, your father says so, and your father knows best!*⁵

American society valued compliance above individuality, including conforming to appropriate gender roles. Situation comedies during the 1950s and early 1960s mirrored these expectations. A sitcom family that violated American norms and values would have experienced a loss of popularity and, in turn, corporate sponsors would lose profit. In the 1950s, most Americans were subjected to television families that were the

⁵ *Father Knows Best*, "The Housekeeper," prod Eugene Rodney, Robert Young, 30 min., CBS, 1950.

ideal, although not necessarily the norm, because Americans were expected to conform to the ideal standards set by society.

Much of the traditional family structure depicted in early situation comedies depended on gender roles within the family unit. In the 1950s, conforming to traditional values meant accepting, not pushing, the boundaries of these expectations. In early television sitcoms centering around families, the parents represented traditional roles for men and women, and the children modeled behavior of good boys and girls. Most Americans could identify with these roles.

At the foundation of these gender expectations was the notion that the man was the father and husband, and therefore, was to be treated with respect and never questioned. The mere title of the popular radio, turned television series, *Father Knows Best* sent a clear message about the role of the man in the nuclear family. Other shows such as *The Ed Wynn Show* and *The Andy Griffith Show* carried the name of the actor playing the central character – the father. These programs characters fulfilled the idea that the father was at the head of all decision-making in the family. *Father Knows Best* was often applauded by television critics for its realistic depiction of family life.⁶ American citizens who tuned into this television program every week believed they were seeing the typical American family, regardless of whether or not their family was similar. They believed that the roles of men and women on this sitcom were representative of what was happening in every American home.

Other situation comedies in the 1950s supported these traditional gender stereotypes. In a 1962 episode of *The Donna Reed Show*, the main character and

⁶ Mary Ann Watson. Defining Visions: Television and the American Experience Since 1945 (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1998), 54.

mother of the household, Donna, is asked to run for town council. Although her family is at first supportive, throughout the sequence of the show, the audience learns that Alex, Donna's husband, experiences a great deal of anxiety over the idea of a wife that has more political power than he. He finally admits to Donna that she is needed around the house, and he does not want her to run for office. Donna is so grateful that she is needed as a wife and mother that she gladly drops out of the race.⁷ This episode's message is clear not only to men (keep your wives in the kitchen!) but to women. The idea is that women should not seek out opportunities for their own pleasure or fulfillment outside the home. Being a wife and a mother is fulfillment enough. It is not only in this particular episode, but in the entire series that the audience is taught lessons of appropriate roles for men and women.

If the outcome of this particular episode of *The Donna Reed Show* had been different and Donna had, in fact, run for and even won public office, it is reasonable to assume this would have an effect on the sitcom's popularity, and perhaps its corporate sponsorship. Just two decades after women went to work to aid their country's effort in World War II, the message was clear: their duty as women was to stay home and perfect the role of wife and mother. A woman's personal ambitions would have to be set aside for the good of her family. Television sitcoms of the era reinforced this belief in weekly episodes and emphasized the idea that women had their place in the domestic sphere.

Men's roles and responsibilities as husbands and fathers were constantly reinforced as well. In an episode of *Father Knows Best* in which Betty, the daughter of the family, decides she wants to become an engineer, a very clear message in the

⁷ Ibid, 60.

script comes through for not only women, but men as well. The show, not surprisingly, ends with Betty deciding to give up an engineering program in favor of winning the heart of a boy at school who does not think it is right for Betty to be in the class. But before she makes her decision, she overhears the boy of interest talking to her father about engineering. When explaining why he feels it is a man's job, the boy says,

*So, when the day's over, he comes home to some nice, pretty wife. That's what makes working all day in the dust and heat worthwhile...but if your nice, pretty girls are working in the dust and heat too, who are the guys going to come home to?*⁸

Here, the woman's role is clearly reinforced. A high school-aged boy is speaking of his expectations for his career and his wife. The implication for young men is clear as well: any husband who lets his wife do a "man's job" will lose his dignity. These messages were embedded in many situation comedies of the 1950s.

In the early years of television sitcoms, family life and gender roles were not always depicted in an accurate or realistic fashion. In the 1950s and 1960s, increasing numbers of married women worked outside the home.⁹ However, despite the overrepresentation of stay-at-home mothers and widower fathers, there was something real in these sitcom families. They represented the expectations placed on both men and women, and showed what Americans wanted for their families. Although women chose to enter the labor force, they understood they were deviating from societal norms. Although many men shared the decision-making with their wives at home, they could

⁸ Ibid, 56.

⁹ Ibid, 58.

watch television and know that in their culture, men were supposed to be in charge of their families. While television sitcoms in this era did not always portray an accurate picture, they did show viewers what was expected of the conventional American family.

The 1960s: Targeting Teens and the “Modern” American

Within ten years of the invention of the television, the American sitcom family was a major part of most Americans' psyche. Americans could judge their own family life based on the standards of what they saw on the television. But by the mid-1960s, alternative family make-ups made their way onto the small screen. *The Brady Bunch* is probably the best-known example of this new version of the American family. The premise of the show - a widower with three sons marries a widow with three daughters - seemed to signal a new era of television in which the non-traditional family was idealized. The show's first season began in 1969 and was complete with episodes that portrayed happy family members experiencing relatively smooth transitions in their new family life. However, episodes during that first season did deal with some conflicts between the two sub-families. Episode three in season one, “A Clubhouse is not a Home” depicted the issues the new group faced in adjusting to living together. The boys and girls were learning to share their space with three new siblings of the opposite sex.¹⁰ However, the conflicts that arose in the first season, and throughout the series, were always minor issues with humorous outcomes and moral lessons for the Brady children, and in turn, the audience. In episode eight, “Father of the Year;” Marcia nominated her new father for a father of the year awards and gets in trouble for the

¹⁰ The Museum of Broadcast Communications, “The Brady Bunch”

ensuing lies she must tell to cover her tracks.¹¹ This is just one example of the many episodes that depict the characters' acceptance and love for their new family members. The viewer is rewarded with both humorous conflict and a happy ending, in the show's dubious attempt to return to the 1950s illustration of family values while still maintaining a sense of modernity.

Family was not the only thing changing on television in the 1960s. The baby-boomer teenage audience composed such a significant percentage of the viewing population that television networks began to seek out programs that appealed to American youth. Two sitcoms that were extremely popular with young teenage girls were *Gidget* and *The Patty Duke Show*. On September 18, 1963, *The Patty Duke Show* premiered. In order to increase significantly low ratings, ABC began targeting the ever-growing teenage audience. After seeing the success the show brought the network, in 1965, ABC aired it back-to-back with *Gidget*. The two shows were similar, as both had an extremely perky teenage girl character.¹² *The Patty Duke Show*, with two main characters, (identical cousins!) managed to send mixed messages about how girls should behave. One cousin had a spunky, outgoing personality while the other was more reserved. Varying in each episode, sometimes Patty Lane was rewarded for her spunkiness, and other times Cathy Lane was rewarded, for her reticence.¹³ The Lane girls and *Gidget*, played by Sally Field, modeled the impossible for many teenage girls who strove to be outgoing and charming, yet reserved and ladylike. And for the

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Mary Ann Watson. Defining Visions: Television and the American Experience Since 1945 (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1998), 108.

¹³ Ibid 109.

remainder of the decade, ABC would enjoy the profits that come when a generation of girls tuned in to find out who will get the boy or who will win the contest.

Other shows airing in the 1960s had significant social implications. The era of social movements began steering the relationship between men and women on American sitcoms in a new direction. Ironically, just as the women's rights movement was beginning to gain strength, shows like *Bewitched*, which first aired in 1964 and ran through 1972, and *I Dream of Jeannie*, airing from 1965 to 1970, gained popularity.¹⁴ The premise for this subgenre with an element of supernatural power was that a woman who held power over a man would eventually find herself unsuccessful in trying to out-sneak her male counterpart.¹⁵ In these relationships, even supernatural powers were not enough to foil a man. These sexist storylines were justification for the submission of women wrapped up in a new subgenre of television sitcoms. At the same time however, it was as if the television networks were acknowledging growing female political and social power, and finding a way to contain it in these fictional characters. Here, women had power over men, but the powers were limited to the domestic sphere. The male figures in their lives insisted they not use their powers, unless it was to do chores around the house or to help the men out of problematic situations.¹⁶ The major difference between these two shows was that while Jeannie became the epitome of a 1950s wife with futuristic powers and 1960s sex appeal, Samantha (from *Bewitched*) was appealing to feminists who were critical of male domination.¹⁷ Both contributed to

¹⁴ Mary Ann Watson. *Defining Visions: Television and the American Experience Since 1945* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1998), 63.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 63.

¹⁶ Susan J. Douglas. *Where the Girls Are* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1994), 126.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 127.

the debate over women's roles and the relationship between men and women within the domestic sphere.

The 1960s brought many changes to American television and situation comedies. Although domestic comedies still remained the staple of primetime television, increasingly, shows without children characters, or at the very least, without a traditional family, were aired. The evolution of television characters would push into the 1970s and Americans would be introduced to workplace situations, African-American families, and many other sub-genres of the situation comedy.

The 1970s: Pushing the Envelope

In an era of social change that included the Vietnam War, the tail end of the Civil Rights Movement, and the debate over the Equal Rights Amendment, television programming that reflected American life looked very different than it had twenty years earlier. That is why, by the beginning of the 1970s, Americans began to see a shift in the content and focus of many sitcoms. Some dealt overtly with social issues, while others experimented with new subject matter by creating characters that represented a changing way of life.

One such character was Mary Richards, the main character in *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, which aired on CBS in the fall of 1970. It was a new subgenre in which the situation focused on a working woman and her "work family."¹⁸ It also represented a shift in how women were represented on television. Here, the main character chose not

¹⁸ [The Museum of Broadcast Communications](http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/_M/htmlM/marytylermo/marytylermo.htm), "The Mary Tyler Moore Show," http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/_M/htmlM/marytylermo/marytylermo.htm

to be married, and instead focused on advancing her career in television broadcasting. Although Mary Richards was not as aggressive or as daring as we would later see in fictional career women such as Murphy Brown. She came along at a time when it seemed possible not only that a woman could have both a career and a family but also that a woman could be happy with just a successful career.

Even as *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* pushed the boundaries of what women could be on television, 1960s attitudes on femininity were often present in the storyline, conflicting with ideas of feminism. Rhoda, Mary Richards' best friend, played the stereotypical woman whose life pursuit was finding "Mr. Right." Adding this character to the storyline allowed the writers to play on the differences between the two women, hinting that it was impossible to have a career and a successful relationship. Young professional woman probably watched Mary and Rhoda and felt that the conflicting personalities seemed all too familiar. In the tradition of Patty and Cathy Lane, even *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* could not send consistent messages to women. Mary Richards also plays into gender stereotypes at her fictional workplace, WJM. She always calls her boss "Mr. Grant" while the other male characters call him by his first name. Even the song lyrics at the beginning of each show seem to tell a story of a "girl" who is determined to make it, yet is intimidated and lacks the confidence to know she will be successful:

Who can turn the world on with her smile?

Who can take a nothing day, and suddenly make it all seem worthwhile?

Well it's you girl, and you should know it

With each glance and every little movement you show it

Love is all around, no need to waste it

You can have a town, why don't you take it

You're gonna make it after all
You're gonna make it after all
How will you make it on your own?
This world is awfully big, girl this time you're all alone
But it's time you started living
It's time you let someone else do some giving
Love is all around, no need to waste it
You can have a town, why don't you take it
You're gonna make it after all
*You're gonna make it after all*¹⁹

The element that made this program such a success was that Mary Richards was a likeable woman. Despite her ambition, her character, and those around her grew and developed as the show progressed through the decade. It is as if we see Mary Richards make her way through her uncertainties and intimidation to become a more confident and accomplished woman at the same time that Americans witnessed a transformation for women in the United States.

CBS had another tremendously successful and trailblazing show go on the air at the beginning of the 1970s. *All in the Family* quickly became one of the most talked-about and controversial shows on television after it aired in 1971. It enjoyed great popularity and success because Norman Lear, the show's producer, managed to combine the traditional situation comedy style of a father-centered family with storylines that dealt with social issues never before discussed on television. The lyrics to the show's theme represented the feelings of many Americans struggling to hold on to "the old days" and dealing with changing times:

¹⁹ Paul Williams, "Love is All Around" (song lyrics) quoted in The Mary Tyler Moore Show prod. James L. Brooks, 30 min, CBS, 1970.

*Boy the way Glen Miller played,
 Songs that made the hit parade
 Guys like us, we had it made
 Those were the days.
 And you know where you were then
 Girls were girls and men were men
 Mister we could use a man like Herbert Hoover again
 Didn't need no welfare states
 Everybody pulled his weight
 Gee, our old LaSalle ran great
 Those were the days!²⁰*

The words that introduced every episode of *All in the Family* set a tone for the issues and topics that would be dealt with on a weekly basis. Producer Norman Lear made it possible to address controversial issues such as race, class, and ethnicity in a satirical way that allowed the audience to forgive the characters for their opinionated, and often times offensive comments. Lear often tackled contemporary social issues through the dialogue between the show's main character, the lovable yet infuriating Archie Bunker and his family members. One of Archie's favorite opponents was his son-in-law, Michael Stivic (Archie called him "meathead"). Archie represented conservative, middle-aged Americans who were nostalgic for the way things used to be. Mike was a young, idealistic, liberal college student who continually pointed out the labels, stereotypes, and inaccuracies that Archie relied on in his theories on society's problems.

²⁰ Lee Adams and Charles Stause, "Those were the Days" (song lyrics) quoted in *All in the Family*, prod. Norman Lear, 30 min, CBS, 1971.

While many Americans idealized Archie and held him up as a true representative of the American working man, others saw the messages Lear sent through Archie's fumbled monologues. Lear stretched the boundaries of what was considered acceptable topics for television. His gutsy writing mixed social controversy with near-genius comedy. Although the show faced its share of criticism over the years, with many articles and editorials questioning the humor in bigotry,²¹ it became one of the most popular shows of the decade. It truly represented the growing conflicts in the United States during that time. *All in the Family* depicted rifts between the maturing baby-boomer generation and their parents, as well as conflicting values and ideas about race, class, sex and ethnicity.

The 1970s came with increasing debate over America's involvement in Vietnam. Young people who protested the war were turned off by their elders' commitment and loyalty to government, while the older generation viewed their children's actions in protest as deviant behavior. Nixon claimed to represent a "silent majority" while a growing division between Americans became more and more prominent. Events like the shooting at Kent State University on May 4, 1970 made Americans even more aware of this generational conflict and the debate over liberalism versus conservative values. Archie Bunker's monologues, and his constant fights with his son-in-law epitomized the two sides many Americans felt they had to choose from.

In just the first season of *All in the Family*, Lear challenges many social conventions. In the very first episode of the series, Archie refers to Latinos and African-Americans as "spics and spades" in a monologue that seems to be addressed more to the audience than to his son-in-law. In this speaking style that viewers will soon grow

²¹ Fed Ferretti, "Are Racism and Bigotry Funny?" New York Times, 12 January, 1971.

accustomed to, Archie claims that he is not responsible for those who struggle in society and that the economically disadvantaged are in that position because they do not work as hard as he does.²² The season goes on to deal with other socially controversial issues such as the Vietnam War, pollution, race relations, and homosexuality. Archie hires a Jewish lawyer because, he says, they are “smarter and shrewder.”²³ He labels a clothing drive a “handout” and refuses to believe that a seemingly masculine former professional football player is gay.²⁴

All in the Family acted as both a representation of American society and a warning to the socially conscious. While the Bunkers were a realistic family, and many Americans identified with how Archie Bunker struggled financially, feared those different than him, stubbornly reacted to a changing world, other television viewers felt that the heavy satire made the show much more than a situation comedy depicting the conventional American family. It was a delineation of the hypocrisy that existed in the United States and the stereotypes upon which so many laid their claims. *All in the Family* was a pivotal television sitcom because it connected the generation that remembered with longing a life that resembled *Leave it to Beaver* with those who looked to a future with a greater social consciousness.

The new sitcom of the 1970s brought with it great change and controversy. While many Americans questioned the new independent women characters and other changing social dimensions, others struggled to deal with changing subject matter. The 1980s would see a return to an emphasis on traditional American values, but this too, would not be without controversy.

²² *All in the Family* Season One, Episode One, prod. Norman Lear, 30 min., CBS, 1971.

²³ *All in the Family* Season One, Episode Three, prod. Norman Lear, 30 min, CBS, 1971.

²⁴ *All in the Family* Season One, Episode Four, prod. Norman Lear, 30 min, CBS, 1971

The 1980s and Early 1990s: Conflicting American Values

The 1980s witnessed a television family that was just as influential as the Bunkers. Americans were introduced to the Huxtables when *The Cosby Show* first appeared on television screens in 1984. In the pilot episode that aired on NBC in the show's first season, the first image the audience sees is a close-up of a sign on the family's front door that says "Dr. Huxtable, MD." Immediately, the viewer is made to understand that a prominent, successful man is at the head of this family. In this episode, Dr. Huxtable, an African-American OB-GYN reassures a nervous, fumbling, soon-to-be father, who happens to be white.²⁵ In this scene, Dr. Huxtable is the superior, better-educated individual. As we watch the show, we learn that education is valued at the Huxtable home, and Cliff and Clair's children are constantly reinforced with the belief that hard work, honesty, and respect will result in life-long success.

In a well-known scene from this pilot episode, Cliff and his son, Theo, discuss Theo's disappointing report card. Theo assures his father that he should not worry about his grades, because instead of going to college, he is planning on getting a job like "regular people." In the comedic style typical of Bill Cosby, Cliff takes his son through a hypothetical situation, complete with monopoly money, in which he has Theo make financial decisions with a month's worth of wages. At the end, when Theo finds his hand empty, Cliff points to the open hand and says, "regular people."²⁶ Cliff is not

²⁵ *The Cosby Show* Season One, "Pilot," prod. Marcy Carsey, Tom Wener, Caryn Sneider, and Bill Cosby, 30 min., NBC, 1984.

²⁶ *The Cosby Show* Season One, "Pilot," prod. Marcy Carsey, Tom Wener, Caryn Sneider, and Bill Cosby, 30 min., NBC, 1984.

only teaching his son a lesson about the rewards of hard work; his character is sending a message to viewers that these are the values of all Americans, not just white Americans.

At the same time that *The Cosby Show* reached a heterogeneous audience with important family values and social messages, it sent another very clear message to Americans of all races. African-Americans could, and did, achieve the social and economic status that up to that point had only been depicted by white people on television. The show was praised by critics for opening a new door into the lives of black Americans, yet Cosby was simultaneously criticized for the lack of "black culture" represented in the Huxtable household. However, the show's supporters claimed that the image of high-achieving African-Americans "effectively moved the racial discourse of television toward the symbolic construction of racial equality and a colorblind society."²⁷ Many critics believed that depicting the Huxtables as a typical American family, rather than one that was an overtly black family allowed the series to appeal to more people and to allow them to consider the possibility of a society in which race was not correlated with class.

Bill Cosby responded to the controversy in his production of the show. He ensured that the situation comedy presented a very clear picture of this particular African-American family. The artwork that hung on the set visible to the television audience was done by black artists. The storylines often called for a look back into African-American history. For instance, an episode in which Theo has to do a school paper on the March on Washington provides an opportunity for the parents and

²⁷ Lauren R. Tucker, "Was the Revolution Televised?: Professional Criticism about 'The Cosby Show' and the Essentialization of Black Cultural Expression," *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 41, no. 1 (1997): 91.

grandparents to share their experiences from that day. Cosby also invited several guest stars to appear over the years, many of them prominent African-Americans such as Lena Horne, Stevie Wonder, B.B. King, and Frank Robinson.

Although the popularity of *The Cosby Show* may not prove that by the 1980s, Americans were ready to accept racial equality or even diversity, its far reaching positive effect is that it showed a black American family that was able to achieve success by the same means, and within the same culture as white Americans. However, the inference that Cosby's submissive nature in accepting "white" culture and failing to represent a realistic "black" culture through his situation comedy has left many critics questioning whether or not *The Cosby Show* was a step forward or backward in race relations.

Perhaps *The Cosby Show* was not a successful vehicle for social change. It did, however, signal a change that had previously occurred in American society. Americans were ready to see a black family depicted on television as more than the next door neighbors to the white, successful, and seemingly superior main characters. They accepted that a black man and his wife could attain high social and economic status through their professional careers and raise their family in an affluent neighborhood. Although the Huxtables' upper-middle class status was hardly the norm for many Americans, they were a symbol of what all Americans wanted to believe they could achieve.

While many Americans already valued material success, the Reagan and Bush presidencies also encouraged a return to conservative American values that, in their view, were wearing away. And, according to these Republican administrations, there

was no place this was more evident than in American homes. In May of 1992, Vice President Dan Quayle spoke of these supposedly diminishing traditional values. After telling his California audience that he believed Americans' strength lay in their diversity, he addressed the changing structure of American families.²⁸ In the wake of the Los Angeles riots related to the Rodney King incident, Quayle claimed "the lawless social anarchy that we saw is directly related to the breakdown of the family structure, personal responsibility, and social order..."²⁹ Quayle continued by describing a solution for reclaiming American values. "Children need love and discipline; they need mothers and fathers. A welfare check is not a husband, the state is not a father."³⁰ Quayle's speech spoke to the concerns of many of his constituents who believed that American values were eroding and that the traditional family was at the foundation of American values. However, Vice President Quayle went on to make a claim that television was responsible for modeling this abandonment of traditional values to Americans:

*Bearing babies irresponsibly is wrong...It doesn't help matters when primetime TV has Murphy Brown, a character who supposedly epitomizes today's intelligent, highly paid professional woman, mocking the importance of fathers by bearing a child alone and calling it just another lifestyle choice.*³¹

Vice President Quayle was referring to the popular television sitcom *Murphy Brown*, which premiered in 1988 on CBS. The show's title character had a baby out of wedlock during the 1992 season. Quayle's comments opened up a floodgate of debate and

²⁸ Dan Quayle, Vice President of the United States, speech, May 19, 1992.

²⁹ Dan Quayle, Vice President of the United States, speech, May 19, 1992.

³⁰ Dan Quayle, Vice President of the United States, speech, May 19, 1992.

³¹ Dan Quayle, Vice President of the United States, speech, May 19, 1992.

controversy over television's influence on social and family values. While many Americans supported Quayle's claim, others argued that *Murphy Brown* had a realistic grasp on the new American family. The show's producer, Diane English, responded to Quayle's claims about American families. In an episode called "I say potato, you say potato," Murphy uses her news show, FYI, as a forum to introduce several hard-working, single-parent American families to dispute Quayle's real-life argument that the non-traditional family was responsible for the breakdown of society's values.³²

Although the Vice President's speech and the ensuing *Murphy Brown* episode brought a renewed energy to the national controversy over the influence of television as an agent of socialization, it was clear that television sitcom producers were changing the focus and content of their programs. Writers and producers were no longer as concerned with conforming to traditional values, as they were in the 1950s, when corporate sponsorship was king. By the 1980s and early 1990s, American sitcoms were depicting families on television that rebelled against what many like Vice President Quayle considered traditional family life. Although the extent of the social consequences of the so-called breakdown of the traditional family would continue to be controversial, it was clear that Americans were more willing than ever to watch these alternative families act out realistic problems in situation comedies.

By the end of the 1980s, Americans had been exposed to a variety of television families from wealthy, professional minorities to working single-moms. As the numbers of single-parent families rose, the 1990s would usher in a new social acceptance of the

³² The Museum of Broadcasting Communications, "Murphy Brown," <http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/M/htmlM/murphybrown/murphybrown.htm>

unconventional television family. Americans watching television at the end of the decade found a greater variety in family make-up than at any other point in history.

The 1990s: The Original “Reality TV”

Television in the new decade witnessed a resurgence of the nuclear family in situation comedies. However, these families brought an element of modernity with them. Although the 1990s sitcom had a traditional element: two parents, children, and most often, a home in the suburbs, the difference was that the source of comedy in these new shows came from the stressful and sometimes near-dysfunctional relationships between family members. Writers played on how each character dealt with family conflict as storylines revolved around real-life issues.³³ Sitcoms such as *Roseanne*, *The Simpsons*, and *Married...With Children* gave their audiences images of the humorous imperfections of the American family. Storylines no longer revolved around tree houses and family pets. These shows dealt with teenage apathy, violence, divorce, and peer pressure, and managed to be funny doing it. The relationship between fictional family members began to change. These new sitcoms that, forty years ago, would have alienated much of the viewing audience were now hugely popular with Americans.

For women, these shows spoke truths about their family experiences. While the June Cleavers of the 1950s and 1960s stood in opposition to the Mary Richards of the

³³ Michael Morgan, Susan Leggett and James Shanahan. “Television and Family Values: Was Dan Quayle Right?” *Mass Communication and Society* 2, no. 1 / 2 (1999): 47.

1970s, the 1980s mom was an impossible ideal.³⁴ These women worked professional jobs, kept their families at an upper-middle class status, and still had time to cook dinner. By the 1990s, expectations of television moms had changed. Sitcoms like *Roseanne* attempted to show the real side of family life, and the struggles that each family member faced.

Roseanne, based on Roseanne Barr's successful stand-up comedy routine, debuted on ABC in 1988. The Conners' blue-collar living situation was reminiscent of the Bunkers from *All in the Family*, yet their family relationships were very different from other television families of the past. The Conners were the exact opposite of the extremely popular Huxtables, from NBC's *The Cosby Show*.³⁵

Roseanne enjoyed just as much popularity as the family-centered shows of the 1980s, however. People tuned in to see Roseanne Barr's depiction of real-life family. The show portrayed the reality of a working-class family struggling to get by as the parents worked jobs in which they were expendable. Roseanne and her husband Dan worked construction, in factories, lunch-counters, as telephone operators, and failed at more than one attempt to start their own business.³⁶ And home was not a haven for the parents. Their three children, Becky, Darlene and DJ were not devoted students that cheerfully helped out around the house. Roseanne and Dan had their share of spousal problems, as well. Critics claimed that the sarcastic and straight-forward dialogue, especially when Roseanne interacted with the kids, was not realistic, but was offensive

³⁴ Mary Ann Watson. *Defining Visions: Television and the American Experience Since 1945* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1998), 71.

³⁵ The Museum of Broadcast Communications, "Roseanne"
<http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/R/htmlR/roseanne/roseanne.htm>

³⁶ Mary Ann Watson. *Defining Visions: Television and the American Experience Since 1945* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1998), 72.

and vulgar.³⁷ At the very least, *Roseanne* raised the level of debate and dialogue about family values in the United States, and was a forerunner among situation comedies that showed what many believed to be reality.

Although controversial, *Roseanne* did receive credit, even from its critics, for pushing new social issues onto the forefront of mass media. *Married...With Children*, which debuted a year before *Roseanne* on the FOX network, did not receive this kind of recognition. Within its first years on the air, *Married...With Children* faced considerable criticism from the viewing public. The show's main character, Al Bundy, was everything that Bill Cosby's Cliff Huxtable was not. Viewers claimed the plotlines exploited women, were filled with stereotypes, and sent the wrong messages to families, especially children. The show was quickly labeled, "antifamily."³⁸ Ironically, as more of the network news shows and nationally published newspapers covered the controversy over the content in *Married...With Children*, the show's ratings skyrocketed, and it stayed on the air through 1997.

In 1989, at the same time that American viewers were growing accustomed to the Conner and Bundy families, they were introduced to the Simpsons. *The Simpsons*, a cartoon family sitcom premiered at the end of the decade, and became a staple of 1990s primetime television. The show's success was similar to *Married...With Children* in that it benefited from the controversy that surrounded episode plots and character behavior. Ten year old Bart, the show's main character, has often been the target of

³⁷ Mary Ann Watson. *Defining Visions: Television and the American Experience Since 1945* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1998), 73.

³⁸ Museum of Broadcast Communications, "Married...With Children." <http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/M/htmlM/marriedw/marriedw.htm>

criticism as a less than suitable role model for elementary-aged children, and Homer, the patriarch of the family, is an underachiever as a father, husband, and bread-winner.

The Simpsons is different from the other “reality” families of 1990s television, however. Writer/producers James L. Brooks and Matt Groening have developed more than a situation comedy depicting a nuclear family in modern America. By creating a family in suburbia, the writers have successfully satirized American culture. Nuclear power, mass media, organized religion, government policy, and corporate greed are among the many subjects that are parodied on *The Simpsons*³⁹. In fact, the situation itself is a parody. The Simpsons are a church-going, working-class family in a suburban town with two parents, three children, and a cat. This is a deliberate play on the family situation comedies of the 1950s and 1960s, although we know that *Father Knows Best* and *Leave it to Beaver* never aired an episode that criticized American social and political institutions.

The last decade of the twentieth century saw the restoration of the nuclear family on television. However, along with this return to traditionalism came a new emphasis on defying the so-called conformity of earlier decades in favor of depicting reality. Although sitcoms like *Roseanne*, *Married...With Children* and *The Simpsons* tended to be controversial in nature, they also appealed to Americans who sought television programming that accented conflict as well as comedy.

³⁹ Museum of Broadcasting Communications, “The Simpsons.” <http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/S/htmlS/simpsonsthe/simpsonsthe.htm>

Since the premier of the television situation comedy in the mid-1950s, viewers have seen an evolution of American life represented on television. Sitcoms such as *Father Knows Best*, *I Dream of Jeannie*, *All in the Family*, and *The Cosby Show* are significant sources that, when pieced together, tell the story of American social history. The development of domestic comedies and the depiction of the family display not only a significant change in family structure, but the expectations Americans have for family relationships. As women have achieved significant social and political gain, female characters have developed from housewives to do-it-all working women. June Cleaver would have been surprised to see a television program named after a professional like *Murphy Brown* or a no-nonsense mother like *Roseanne*. As values and attitudes on gender, race, class and family have evolved over the last half-century, so have the networks' willingness to deal with these controversial issues in primetime. Each of these situation comedies has become a microcosm of its time in American history.

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**Interpreting American Culture through Film
1950-1990**

by

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American cultural history is often viewed through the looking glass of the mass media. Radio, television, music, and film have dominated popular culture since 1950, but each gives a different perspective on American culture. Radio and television, influenced by corporate sponsorship, tended, throughout the twentieth century, to produce the least objectionable material and to reach as wide an audience as possible in order to maximize studio profits. While to be sure, American filmmakers had similar objectives, for many Americans, going to the movies provided a unique experience they could not get at home in front of their television sets. American films and the artists who created them were able to touch on a variety of subjects that television and radio producers never could. Film, like other elements of mass media, can be used to study the changes in American society, but it provides an approach all its own – one that sits in the middle of popular culture.

The 1950s: Cold War and Conformity

Politically, the early 1950s were dominated by the Cold War. The growing arms race with the Soviet Union and Senator McCarthy's investigations into suspected communists in the federal government played on people's concerns until, ultimately, paranoia set in the American psyche. These issues resulted in a decade in which consensus and conformity were valued among all else in society.

McCarthy, a Republican from Wisconsin, became a symbol of the era as he ruined careers, and used lies and rumors in an apparent attempt to curb what he warned was a growing communist membership in the United States. By 1954, when the Senator went after the army and suggested that President Eisenhower was soft on

communism, it became clear to most Americans that McCarthy had used these strategies in order to further his own political career.⁴⁰

While McCarthy created controversy, Dwight Eisenhower set a mood of conformity. In a time when most Americans felt united by having a common enemy in the Soviet Union, Eisenhower served in an atmosphere of political consensus⁴¹. Dealing with controversial issues like civil rights only when the problem came to a head, as was the case in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1957 when he was pressed to enforce the Supreme Court's ruling in *Brown v the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, President Eisenhower maintained the presence of a steady leader throughout the 1950s.

The liberal ideology that grew during the decade can be traced to a brief period of economic growth at the beginning of the decade. Many Americans believed that the United States had become a country dominated by the middle class, and one in which capitalism allowed everyone an equal opportunity to succeed.⁴² This permitted Americans to reject communism as an evil disease that affected less-enlightened people and nations. From this ideology came the two dominant values of the decade: the pursuit of success, and an emphasis on conformity.⁴³ If one was successful, it meant that capitalism worked. If one conformed to the political and social ideology of the day, it meant that one belonged, and was not an outsider.

It was this emphasis on success and conformity, or rather the fear of failure and radicalism, that motivated a new genre of American film: science fantasy and science

⁴⁰ Leonard Quart and Albert Auster. *American Film and Society since 1945* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2002), 40

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 40.

⁴² *Ibid*, 41.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 41.

horror. These movies, which had an element of science fiction or alien existence became quite popular in the 1950s. One of the most successful in the genre, released in 1956, was *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. Directed by Don Siegel and Produced by Walter Wanger, the film has since become a cultural symbol of the Cold War era. As Americans became more entrenched in the atomic age, popular culture developed in order to hold their interest.

Invasion of the Body Snatchers tells a story about a typical American town in which alien seed pods have invaded by growing into human forms and taking over real people and transforming their personalities, making them cold and emotionless. The film clearly has several themes that originate in the decades' widely-held values and beliefs, and serves as an allegory for the Cold War. There is a warning against new technology in the way the characters attempt to explain the pods. "So much has been discovered these past few years that anything is possible. It may be the result of atomic radiation on plant life...a mutation of some kind," claims Dr. Miles Bennell (Kevin McCarthy).⁴⁴ This element of the film played on the fears and anxieties that accompany the new technology of the nuclear age, and its undesired effects, such as atomic fallout.

In addition to alien mutation as a metaphor for atomic radiation, there are other Cold War themes. The lone Dr. Bennell, struggling at the end of the film to convince people of the danger of the pods seems to represent Joseph McCarthy's claims that communist spies had infiltrated the federal government. The alien pods themselves are a metaphor for communists. The message here was that just as it was hard to tell when

⁴⁴ Jay Carr, ed. *The A List: The National Society of Film Critics' 100 Essential Films* (Cambridge, Mass: Da Capo Press, 2002), 151.

a person had become a pod, you could never be sure that your next door neighbor was not a commie spy.

Invasion of the Body Snatchers is just one example of the increasing popularity of alien science fiction films in the 1950s. Aliens in films often represented the communist “reds” and convinced Americans more than ever to conform and blend in so they would not appear too radical or different. As people became increasingly concerned with growing conflicts with the Soviet Union and their own domestic safety from communist spies, these films provided a fictional scenario with which, however unconsciously, Americans could identify.

Of course, not all 1950s films belonged to the science fiction genre. Realizing a new path to success, many filmmakers of the decade devoted themselves to a specific group of consumers to whom their successors in later years would also show loyalty: the teenager. As a result, films such as *Rebel Without a Cause* enjoyed tremendous popularity.

This is where American film diverges from other elements of popular culture, specifically, television. Where many situation comedies of the time emphasized the sameness of the American experience, new film genres allowed for more than one message to be sent to the American psyche than what sitcoms were capable of. While television viewers were learning from *Father Knows Best* and *Leave it to Beaver*, that there was only one type of family, and only one acceptable way for a boy or girl to behave, moviegoers were getting a far different experience.

Although films such as the aforementioned *Body Snatchers* preached conformity by warning of the alien element, new genres, such as the teenage drama allowed a

different view of American to emerge. *Rebel Without a Cause* shook an already panicky American psyche. It showed the world through the eyes of a sensitive teenager who was an outsider, and what people saw was that the adults in his life could not be counted on.⁴⁵

Contributing to the popularity and mystique of the film was its cast. The film was made in 1954, with James Dean in mind. When Warner Brothers realized the extent of Dean's popularity after the release of *East of Eden* that same year, the studio devoted more time and money to the project. The movie was released on October 3, 1955, four days after Dean died in a car crash.⁴⁶ His shocking death certainly contributed to the film's popularity and its theme of the tragic lives of youth.

Rebel Without a Cause is historically significant on a cultural level because of its ability to show life from a loner teenager's perspective. The premise is to show one day in the life of Dean's character, Jim Stark, the new guy at school. Through Jim's experiences we see that tragic things happen to people, and there are few people in life we can count on. While television sitcoms sent the message that the nuclear family was the backbone of American society we could always count on, and conforming to American values such as loyalty and hard work was the norm, movies like *Rebel Without a Cause* showed us that not everyone agreed with these American values.

The 1960s: An Era of Social Change

When analyzing the 1960s from a social and political perspective, it is clearly one of the most complex decades in United States history. The beginning of the decade

⁴⁵ Ibid, 245.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 245.

mirrored the one before in many ways, although many changes were on the horizon. John F. Kennedy's narrow victory over Richard Nixon in the 1960 Presidential election was symbolic of this change, and his inauguration gave many Americans the feeling that a new generation was leading the nation. However, despite having a leader who was the youngest president ever elected and political advisors in their twenties and thirties, very few changes were evident in American foreign policy. Kennedy's administration would have to deal with the Cuban Missile Crisis, and increasing tensions with the Soviet Union, symbolized most prominently by the construction of the Berlin Wall at the beginning of the decade. These atomic-age tensions kept many Americans from moving on from the Cold War fears and paranoia that seemed to dominate the decade before, and it forced the Kennedy administration to keep strong Cold War rhetoric as the major focus of its foreign policy.

By the mid-1960s, however, elements of American society had grown increasingly complex. The baby-boomer generation, born to parents who had lived through the Great Depression and served in World War II, came of age and it became evident that they held values and beliefs very different from their parents' generation. Many teenagers and young adults began to reject the values of hard work in order to achieve material success and wealth that their parents held up as the so-called American dream. They mocked the sameness and consensus valued by their elders, and pointed to the cookie-cutter lifestyles of suburban Americans as unnatural conformity.

This backlash against traditional American values and beliefs was highlighted by the civil rights and anti-war movements whose strength grew throughout the decade.

Divisions formed among Americans based not just on their stance on these issues, but on class, race, gender and age. As images of violence between civil rights workers and white policeman in the Deep South were projected on television screens across the country, many Americans began to realize that a rift had formed as a result of the movement. In later years, Northern cities would see their share of racially motivated violence and city-wide riots as well. Similarly, formal protests and marches, both in show of support for civil rights and a stance against the war in Vietnam, became increasingly common throughout the decade. With these social movements, an era of dissent and protest had begun.

Much of the turmoil of the sixties surrounded death. With John F. Kennedy's assassination in 1963, a realization hit Americans that they were not invincible to tragedy. By the end of the decade, the nation had lost several other leaders in Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy, all to assassinations. In addition, the riots at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago mirrored the turbulence that had been a part of many of the protests Americans had witnessed throughout the decade. In hindsight, many historians look back to 1968 as the culmination of these tensions, and a symbolic climax in a decade defined by social change and cultural unrest.

Backlash against the 1950s Cold War mentality was a theme that stood prominent throughout the decade. The intensification of Cold War strategy and anti-Soviet foreign policy became so significant during Kennedy's presidency that many of the leading thinkers of the time began to take a more critical view of America's stance on the Cold War. Many Americans were convinced that the Cold War was intensifying

and could possibly lead to actual war with the Soviet Union. Events such as the U-2 surveillance plane shot down over the Soviet Union in May of 1960, the Bay of Pigs fiasco in 1961 and the following Cuban Missile Crisis added to these fears. In addition, the Berlin Wall was erected and the Soviets announced they would resume testing of nuclear weapons. Events such as these made Americans fearful of the realities of atomic war, and President Kennedy's call for Americans to be equipped with fallout shelters added to their concerns.⁴⁷

It was during this surge of Cold War activity and intensification that some of the more radical thinkers of the day began to question the legitimacy of the Cold War mentality, and the liberal consensus that the United States, as defenders of democracy and a world leader, had a duty to pursue victory over the Soviet Union. These leaders, such as Edmund Wilson and H. Stuart Hughes, warned that a continued build-up of nuclear weapons could mean the destruction of mankind, and they encouraged deterrence strategies and disarmament.⁴⁸ After the increase in Cold War tensions in the early 1960s, some Americans were ready to listen to their warnings.

Director Stanley Kubrick began working on *Dr. Strangelove, or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* in 1962, and decided to use this film to call attention to what he saw as a major problem for American society: the fact that man had made "scientific and technological advances inconceivable to previous generations but lacks the wisdom to perceive how the new gadgetry might be used in constructive ways or, more fundamentally, to ask whether the advance might not cause more harm than

⁴⁷ Peter C. Rollins, ed. *Hollywood as Historian: American Film in a Cultural Context* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1983), 193

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 193

good.”⁴⁹ At first, the film was planned to be a serious critique of American foreign policy and of the problem of accidental nuclear war, but as production began, the writers and directors continued to run into a unique problem. Kubrick found that if he made the film a drama, he would be creating a story within the framework of the accepted Cold War mentality – the exact mentality he was trying to critique. He described this realization in an interview: “ideas kept coming to me which I would discard because they were so ludicrous. I kept saying to myself, ‘I can’t do this. People will laugh.’”⁵⁰ It was this recognition that allowed Kubrick to conclude that the film would be best as a black comedy. According to Charles Maland, a professor of English and film, the movie’s plot is actually quite realistic and suspenseful which is part of what makes it work as a dark comedy.⁵¹ It’s viewers laugh at the film’s outrageous plot, but on some level, they recognize its realistic nature.

Dr. Strangelove tells us the story of the Russians building a the ultimate nuclear weapon that will automatically detonate if the Soviet Union is attacked. A paranoid American General, unaware of the weapon, sends bombers to the Soviet Union to attack. The President tries to stop the attack, and even works with the Russians to prevent the planes from carrying out their mission. They are unsuccessful, and the movie ends with the detonation of the weapon and the end of the world. Its comedic elements lie in the use of hilariously inappropriate music, (“We’ll Meet Again” plays as mushroom clouds explode to the sky) and the prevalence of sexual innuendos, most notably, the characters names (General Buck Turgidson and President Muffley, among others). The film is funny, but more importantly, its attempt to expose the deterrence

⁴⁹ Ibid, 194.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 196.

⁵¹ Ibid, 197.

strategies of the Cold War as ridiculous and ineffective succeeds. And by *Dr. Strangelove's* release in 1964, more Americans were ready for this new view of Cold War ideology.

Another changing American view by the middle of the decade was that of race relations in the United States. The Civil Rights movement saw its first successes several years earlier with the desegregation of the armed forces and the federal government in 1947 and Jackie Robinson's historical move to major league baseball, breaking the color barrier in the same year. By the 1950s, the focus had shifted to segregation in education, and civil rights workers won a major victory in the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*. In coming years, major conflicts would result over implementation that decision, including President Eisenhower's support for the "Little Rock Nine" as they courageously desegregated Little Rock Central in 1957, and several related conflicts in the arena of college segregation.

By the 1960s, many college students had formed ranks in order to improve the conditions faced by blacks in southern states. The Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee, among other organizations, used non-violent tactics and civil disobedience, according to the teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to accomplish their objectives. Sit-ins in North Carolina lunch counters, "freedom rides" to Southern cities' bus terminals, and marches into some of the most segregated areas in the nation were just some of the methods they used.

One of the reasons these civil rights workers saw a response from the federal government was that many of their protests and the ensuing violent reactions on the

part of Southern whites were televised and reported on the evening news. President John Kennedy and Attorney General Robert Kennedy were forced to take action to enforce civil rights more than any administration had before, because of the media coverage. As Americans became conscious of these issues, a debate began on racial equality in the United States. Now that the debate had begun, the mass media became more likely to use the topic of race relations in popular culture.

Whereas television studios were still weary of objectionable subject matter, or any topic that might cause controversy, film studios were more likely to take these risks. The result was a collection of race-related films produced and released during the decade. Two of the most notable, both Sidney Poitier films, and both released in 1967 were *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* and *In the Heat of the Night*.

Both of these films faced challenges in production and release however, because of what was considered controversial subject matter. *In the Heat of the Night* told the story of a Northern African-American detective named Virgil Tibbs (Poitier) who, originally mistaken for a suspect in a murder, is called on to help solve the case. The plot is scattered with instances of racial tension. The most well-known line of the film demonstrates one of these moments, when the prejudiced Sheriff Gillespie feels threatened by Tibbs:

Gillespie: Well, you're pretty sure of yourself, aren't you, Virgil? Virgil, that's a funny name for a nigger boy to come from Philadelphia. What do they call you up there?

Virgil: They call me *Mister Tibbs*.⁵²

⁵² *In the Heat of the Night*, Dir. Norman Jewison, Prod. Walter Mirisch. United Artists, 1967.

Having a film with a black actor in a leading role, playing a main character that was constantly out-thinking and out-doing white characters was so controversial that the production crew realized that it could not be filmed where the story took place, in the Deep South. Most of the film was made in Illinois and Tennessee.⁵³ Apparently, although Hollywood was ready to make a film with such subject matter, not all Americans were ready to accept it. The film's popularity, however, shows that American attitudes about race and discrimination were changing.

Similarly, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, also starring Sydney Poitier and directed by Stanley Kramer, dealt with a contemporary controversy. The premise of the film was a white woman named Joanna (Katharine Houghton) and a black man, Dr. Prentice (Poitier) who come home to Joanna's home to announce to her parents (and eventually his) that they are engaged to be married. The parents' roles became the most memorable in the film. Joanna's parents were played by Spencer Tracy (in his last role, soon before his death) and Katharine Hepburn, who won an Oscar for the role. Dr. Prentice's parents were played by Beah Richards and Roy Glenn. The parents' characters got attention because so many Americans empathized with how they struggled to accept their children's decision to marry.

In 1967, many Southern states still outlawed interracial marriage. *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* pushed boundaries that even *In the Heat of the Night* did not approach. Although the film was inherently controversial, it was decidedly apolitical. The film was a success because it sent a strong message about the morality of interracial marriage not by lecturing the audience about civil rights and social equality, but asking the viewers to consider the power of love. Every memorable dialogue or

⁵³ www.filmsite.org/inth.html

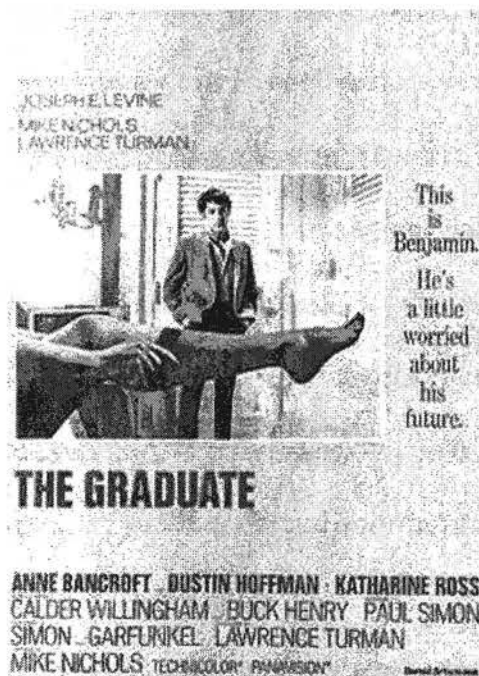
speech from the film focuses on this topic. *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* challenged American's notions of equality and fairness by getting them to empathize with all of the characters, not by attacking the existing political system. Although it would be difficult to categorize the film as radical, it was forward thinking enough to be a significant symbol of changing American values.

Just as *In the Heat of the Night* and *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* recognized changing American ideas about race, many other films represented an emergence of youth and counterculture and the divisions these groups would create in society. *The Graduate*, released in 1967 was a groundbreaking film that highlighted a growing rift between the adults in society and their children, the baby-boomers, who were coming of age in the 1960s.

The Graduate follows the life of Benjamin Braddock, a recent college graduate who has returned home for the summer. The movie was extremely popular with teenagers and college students, as it reflected much of the indecision and frustration that young people face as they reach transitional points in their lives. Ben seems alienated and aimlessly drifting through life, unsure what to do next. Several scenes in the film show Benjamin in a crowded place (such as an airplane) yet he appears to be totally isolated. Other times, he is drifting along in his parents' pool (just as he appears to drift through life), while they worry about his growing apathy.

The storyline takes a turn when Benjamin is "seduced" by and has an affair with a friend of his parents, Mrs. Robinson. Although he dates her daughter, Elaine, a girl his own age, Ben feels trapped by this new relationship. The theme here is the

innocence of youth being exploited and betrayed by the corrupt older generation.⁵⁴ Throughout the film, Ben continues to question the American values that his parents are so committed to. Many of the young Americans who saw *The Graduate* could identify with Ben's struggles and lack of direction. It perfectly symbolized the mood of young Americans in a time of social conflict, escalating war, and increasing uncertainty. The film's poster manages to show both the generational conflict through its imagery, and summarize Ben's struggles as a typical young adult in a changing American culture:



www.filmsite.org/grad.html

The Graduate was not the only movie made to appeal to the growing consumer market of teenagers and young adults, but it is viewed as one of the most historically significant because of its ability to demonstrate the growing alienation of a younger generation as they reject the values of their parents' America.

⁵⁴ www.filmsite.org/grad/html

It took one of the last films of the decade to demonstrate all that had divided Americans throughout it. *Easy Rider*, filmed during the turbulent year of 1968, and released in 1969, during a time when the youth counterculture of drugs, protests, and anti-authority was at the height of its popularity, became one of the defining films of the 1960s.

The film follows a trio of rebels played by Jack Nicholson, Dennis Hopper (who also directed), and Peter Fonda (the film's producer). It tracks their journey across America, as liberated rebels clashing with an America that rejects their non-conformist ways. The promotional posters for the movie read:

*A man went looking for America and couldn't find it anywhere.*⁵⁵

Despite, or perhaps because of its clear message of non-conformity and rebellion, the film enjoyed tremendous success. Fonda and Hopper were not shy about the message of the film. They wanted people to know that they aimed to portray a counterculture movement that was opposed to the values and norms of dominant American society. Fonda explained the origins of the title *Easy Rider* in a *Rolling Stone* interview in 1969: "Easy rider is a Southern term for a whore's old man, not a pimp, but the dude who lives with a chick. Because he's got the easy ride. Well, that's what's happened to America, man. Liberty's become a whore, and we're all taking an easy ride."⁵⁶ The film's soundtrack, images, and dialogue paint a picture for us today of the diversity of American culture, and the challenges faced by Americans as the diversity seemed to pull the fabric of society apart.

⁵⁵ www.filmsite.org/easy.html

⁵⁶ Jay Carr, ed. *The A List: The National Society of Film Critics' 100 Essential Films* (Cambridge, Mass: Da Capo Press, 2002), 107.

The 1960s saw a tremendous change in values, both political and cultural. Americans witnessed the assassination of a President and several other political leaders. They experienced the height of global conflict, and the backlash against American foreign policy that ensued. The nation encountered great social change and conflict, with the civil rights and anti-war movements, and as a result, divisions occurred, not just along racial lines, but along class and generational lines as well. The decade was defined by these conflicts, and the popular culture of the day outlined its social changes. American films resisted the urge other mass media gave into to show society as status quo. The era's films portrayed these changes for Americans, pointing out conflicts, and representing the discord that would define the decade.

The 1970s: An Era of Political Query

While the 1960s was a decade of great social and political change, the 1970s was a time of recovery from that change. As American involvement in the Vietnam War and the controversy surrounding it heightened, and then eventually dwindled, Americans were forced to look back and assess their nation's actions in the conflicts both abroad and at home. Similarly, conspiracies and crimes concerning political leaders led many Americans to question their government's actions at home. The 1970s, therefore, became a decade in which Americans reflected upon decisions of the recent past, and attempted to move forward using lessons learned.

The Candidate, a film released in 1972 played on the concept of corrupt political machines, a topic many Americans had become more familiar with over the years. Alienated by politicians that seemed fake and out of touch with real people, Americans

had, by the 1970s, began to speak out about the way the political system worked. *The Candidate* tells the story of a puppet politician whose strings are being pulled by campaign managers and other party workers. Robert Redford plays Bill McKay, an idealistic lawyer whose good looks and charm gets him chosen to run in an impossible-to-win Senate race. Although he starts his campaign with honesty and integrity, speaking out on the issues that mean the most to him, the more it looks like he could win the election, the more McKay begins to use political clichés and abandon his liberal stances on the issues. His campaign slogan is, "Bill McKay: the better way!"⁵⁷

In the end, McKay's campaign manager's strategy works, and he wins the Senate seat. At the end of the movie, the realization sets in that he has won, and he must now learn to make decisions on his own, although he has not thought for himself during the campaign. McKay has lost his ideals and values while running for office, letting them erode in order to win victory. The film is a depiction of the view of national politics of the day. In a time when Americans felt increasingly disaffected by politics, and began to lose confidence in their leaders, this film demonstrated what many people saw as the futility of the political process.

Although *The Candidate* was released in the same year as the Watergate break in, it would be months before the full truth came to the American people concerning the political scandal. President Nixon resigned on August 8th, 1974 amid the controversy surrounding the white house tapes and his role in the cover-up. That same year, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, the two journalists who had uncovered the Watergate scandal released a book called *All the President's Men*, which described in

⁵⁷ *The Candidate*, Dir. Michael Ritchie, Prod. Walter Coblenz. Warner Bros., 1972.

detail their journalistic process from when the story broke through the resignations of H.R. Haldeman and John Ehrlichman and the discovery of the Nixon tapes.

Two years later, the book was adapted for the movie screen in a film by the same name, starring Robert Redford and Dustin Hoffman. The film covers the first several months of the Watergate scandal and ends with President Nixon's dramatic announcement of his resignation. Although the book received much applause for its journalistic account, the film was significant because it brought the story to a much wider audience. After the Watergate scandal, many Americans felt scarred by the events of the early 1970s, and wondered to what extent they could trust their leaders. Although Woodward and Bernstein's book and the film following it contribute to this cynicism, both signal a change in American culture. In the 1960s, many working-class conservative Americans, those whom Nixon labeled the "silent majority" felt that it was unpatriotic to question their political leaders. But by 1974, most Americans viewed it as a necessary, although distressing reality.

At the same time that Americans were dealing with political controversy at home, they watched as American involvement in Southeast Asia began to decline. By the time American troops pulled out from Vietnam, very few American films had been made on the subject. In contrast, several films were made during World War I, World War II, and Korea, whether documentary or fictional, in order to garner support for the war. During American involvement in Vietnam however, the only true pro-war film made was *The Green Berets* in 1968, starring John Wayne, a long-time supporter of the war. There was so much controversy surrounding the war by the end of the 1960s that few studios

wanted to make a film with subject matter that could easily offend half the viewing audience.

By the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, Americans became increasingly aware of what was going on in Vietnam. The television did not show just the casualties and violence of war, but also the changing public attitude toward it. The tone of the questions at press conferences became increasingly cynical, sending messages to the viewing audience that the public should be skeptical of the answers they were getting on the war.⁵⁸ The television war left a legacy more than of distrust, however. It created an audience that had grown accustomed to the images of war, so that by the time emotions had cooled enough for studios to consider a Vietnam era film, it would be hard to create a film that depicted the war as accurately and realistically as people recalled seeing on television.⁵⁹

Small films on the subject were released in the second part of the decade. *Boys in Company C*, *Tracks*, and *Go Tell the Spartans* were all released in 1978. Three bigger films, *Coming Home* (1978), *The Deer Hunter* (1978), and *Apocalypse Now* (1979) would follow suite. While *Coming Home* gave an openly critical portrayal of the Vietnam conflict, it avoided any real images of violence and tragedy. *The Deer Hunter* and *Apocalypse Now* were known more for their straightforward approach to the subject of the morality of war.

The Deer Hunter told the story of three men whose lives were interrupted by the war. It portrays war as a tragic event in their lives. The movie was criticized for its unrealistic and racist portrayal of the Vietcong, but also recognized for its ability to show

⁵⁸ Peter C. Rollins, ed. *Hollywood as Historian: American Film in a Cultural Context* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1983), 231

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 232

the psychological impact of war.⁶⁰ *Apocalypse Now* received criticism not for its portrayal of the Vietcong, but its dramatic imagery that to many, seemed unrealistic.

Francis Ford Coppola, the film's director, stated that his intention in creating the film was to "create a film experience that would give its audience a sense of the horror, the madness, the sensuousness, and the moral dilemma of the Vietnam War...and yet I wanted it to go further, to the moral issues that are behind all wars."⁶¹ In order to accomplish this objective, Coppola creates a Vietnam era story that parallels the Joseph Conrad novel, *The Heart of Darkness*. Although the film was often criticized because its attempts to mirror the novel often took the movie into unrealistic settings – images Americans did not find familiar in their conscious memory of the war – it was respected for achieving the objective that Coppola hoped for. While it is not a documentary, *Apocalypse now* confronted American's notions of the morality of war.⁶² Robert DuVall's character, Lieutenant Colonel Kilgore, for instance, is remembered for the famous phrase, "I love the smell of napalm in the morning"⁶³ just as he orders the destruction of a village so that he can surf on its beach. This and many other appalling images in the film give its viewers a sense of the chaos and lunacy of war.⁶⁴

Roger Ebert said in his review of *Apocalypse Now* that "it is not about war so much as about how war reveals truths we would be happy never to discover."⁶⁵ Americans were not ready for this or other Vietnam-era films in the earlier part of the decade, or during the war itself. They had to come to terms with the faults and failures

⁶⁰ www.filmsite.org/deer.html

⁶¹ Peter C. Rollins, ed. *Hollywood as Historian: American Film in a Cultural Context* (Lexington, Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1983), 230.

⁶² *Ibid*, 233

⁶³ *Apocalypse Now*, Dir. Francis Ford Coppola, Prod. American Zoetrope. United Artists, 1979.

⁶⁴ Leonard Quart and Albert Auster. *American Film and Society since 1945* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2002), 123.

⁶⁵ Roger Ebert. *The Great Movies* (New York: Broadway Books, 2002), 38

of war, of the mistakes their leaders made, and their own willingness at the time to accept the war as a moral and just battle for peace. It was not until Americans had a few years to allow their emotions to cool that they could finally be ready to call into question their nation's motives in the longest and most divisive war in American history.

The 1980s: Conservatism and Conflict

By the 1980s, many of America's baby-boomers had grown up to be career-driven adults with suburban homes and children in school. A shift occurred from the liberal conflict-minded youthful generation that questioned authority, to responsible, conservative adults who valued the American dream of success. Much was made of this shift in American films of the 1980s. Some filmmakers sought to point to this contradiction while others used the conservative values of the majority to generate success at the box office.

Politically, the decade was defined by Ronald Reagan's conservative coalition. Elected in 1980, Reagan was seen as a charming, well-spoken candidate that reminded most voters of their grandfather. The "Great Communicator" as he was known, was so popular, in fact, that he survived a recession, a ten percent increase in unemployment, and a widening income gap in his first term of office to be reelected in 1984. In addition to the staunch economically conservative views of Reaganomics, the President was also known for holding conservative moral views, and therefore held ranks with what was known as the Moral Majority: American Protestants who called for school prayer, a repeal of *Roe v Wade*, and called for a return to "family values."⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Leonard Quart and Albert Auster. *American Film and Society since 1945* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2002), 129.

While many Americans, unconcerned with the fact that their upper-middle class lifestyle was quite different than the growing number of Americans living in poverty, remained devoted to this conservative tide, many filmmakers began to play on the plastic nature of their lives as subject matter for films. One such film was *Ordinary People*, based on the book by Judith Guest, and released in 1980. It won the Academy Award that year for best picture, and was extremely popular among movie-goers. Some critics have compared the film to *The Graduate* because both are in an upper-middle class setting, and have young main characters that are alienated from the adults around them. However, in *Ordinary People*, the villain is not middle-class lifestyle and values. It is the main character, Conrad's mother. Played by Mary Tyler Moore, Beth Jarret is the typical WASP mother who represses any negative feeling or strong emotion in order to maintain a household and family life that others will perceive as perfect.⁶⁷ She is completely obsessed with control, and refuses to admit that her family has fallen apart since the accidental death of her oldest son. In fact, she will not deal with her younger son, Conrad's deepening depression since the accident. While Calvin Jarret, the father, is portrayed as a more compassionate parent, both represent what is wrong with upper-middle class suburbia: obsession with perfection over reality.

While *Ordinary People* deals with the issues of conservative America in dramatic fashion, *The Big Chill* approaches it in a more comedic way. Released in 1983, the movie's premise deals with a group of old college friends who reunite after one of their friends has committed suicide. They spend the length of the film reflecting on the times they used to have, and the things they used to value. Although they were teens of the

⁶⁷ Ibid, 132.

1960s who experimented with drugs and attended antiwar rallies, most of them now experience financial success and lead a modestly conservative life.

The film is decidedly anti-radical, as it pokes fun of the values the group used to hold.⁶⁸ This is symbolized in two of the film's characters, Harold and Nick. Harold has probably bought into conservative values more than the others, has married and seems at home in the eighties, and he is happy with his life. Nick, however, is a college drop out and drug dealer struggling to move on and make something out of his life.⁶⁹ Nick is miserable, because Nick did not grow up. *The Big Chill* is a perfect example of how young adults in the 1980s justified the decisions they had made in life, and the change in their values and beliefs.

A string of youth-centered movies from the decade paints a picture of middle-class America as well. John Hughes' teenage films, such as *Sixteen Candles* (1984), *The Breakfast Club* (1985), *Weird Science* (1985) and *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* (1986) have several elements in common. Not only does each depict one or a few days in the life of a "typical" American high-schooler, all portray middle or upper-middle class lifestyles and none have any main characters that are not white. Again, this shows that middle class Americans in the 1980s remained uninterested in any topic other than those of their social group and economic class.

Although many of Hughes' plots did include a conflict of some kind, usually created by high school cliques or minor economic differences between students, every one of his movies ended happily. Teenagers in the 1980s were not interested in seeing anything different. No lessons were learned by watching these films, and certainly, no

⁶⁸ Ibid, 140

⁶⁹ Ibid, 141.

real deviance occurred. Even those characters who skipped class or lied to their parents dealt with minor infractions, if anything.⁷⁰ Clearly, the youth of America in the 1980s was less socially conscious than the generations that came before them.

By the end of the decade, some filmmakers became increasingly willing to approach more controversial topics that would upset the conservative coalition that had been built. Most notably, Director Spike Lee's emergence in 1989 with the popularity of *Do the Right Thing* would signal a change in the social landscape, and what issues filmmakers would be willing to take on as the 1990s approached.

Lee wrote *Do the Right Thing* partially in response to several racial incidents that occurred throughout the decade. In September of 1983, an African-American named Michael Steward was beaten to death by New York City transit officers after being arrested for using graffiti. In 1984, Eleanor Bumpers, a black woman in her sixties was shot and killed when the police attempted to evict her from her apartment. In 1986, four young African-American men were chased and beaten by a mob in Queens after their car broke down. One of the men, Michael Griffith, died. Finally, in the summer of 1989, right after the film was released, four men were beaten, one of whom was shot and killed by a mob in Brooklyn.⁷¹ The events of that tragedy were eerily similar to those depicted in the movie.

From its onset, *Do the Right Thing* tells the viewers that the film is about conflict. The opening scene shows Rosie Perez dancing angrily to the song which serves as the anthem for the film, Public Enemy's "Fight the Powers that Be":

⁷⁰ Ibid, 151

⁷¹ Dennis Sullivan and Fred Boehrer. "Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing*: Filmmaking in the American Grain" *Contemporary Justice Review* 6, no. 2 (2003): 145.

**Got to give us what we want
 Got to give us what we need...
 We got to fight the powers that be
 To revolutionize make a change
 What we need is awareness
 Power to the people, no delay.
 Lemme hear you say
 Fight the power⁷²**

The film is about racial conflict and violence in New York City, but Spike Lee sets his story in motion using just one day in a Brooklyn neighborhood. The summer day is expected to break heat records, but everyone remains cheerful and friendly to one another. Mookie (played by Lee) delivers pizzas for Sal, the Italian-American owner of the local pizzeria. Although Sal's sons show signs of prejudice, Sal is no bigot. He appreciates and loves the neighborhood kids who have "grown up on his pizza."⁷³

However, the mood turns darker as the day grows hotter. In the film's most memorable sequence, Lee shows a montage of the various ethnicities of characters, as they spew out all their hatred, using the most vicious stereotypes about the other characters' races. And later on, Radio Raheem, a friend of Mookie's, has a confrontation with Sal over the volume of his music. The fight spills out into the street, and the police are called in, who accidentally choke Radio Raheem to death. A mob ensues, and Mookie, the once loyal employee of Sal's Pizzeria leads the hysterical crowd by throwing a garbage can through the store's window. The movie ends in a tragic death, and the reaction of a destructive crowd.

When the movie was first released, many critics and reviewers expressed concern that it would cause violence on the part of African-American mobs. Joe Klein,

⁷² Ibid, 145.

⁷³ *Do the Right Thing*, Dir. Spike Lee, Prod. Spike Lee. Universal Pictures, 1989.

of *New York Magazine* famously claimed that the film would incite riots, and he encouraged people to avoid the movie.⁷⁴

Although Klein may have been expressing the views of some white Americans, he proved Lee's point for him. To Lee, the movie was not supposed to be about right or wrong, or black or white. It was supposed to be about empathy and understanding others in your world. In his favorable review of the film, Roger Ebert said,

*Spike Lee has done an almost impossible thing. He'd made a movie about race in America that empathized with all the participants. He didn't draw lines or take sides, but simply looked with sadness at one racial flashpoint that stood for many others.*⁷⁵

Over the years, Spike Lee has responded to the white outcry over his film. He said that he had often been asked if Mookie "did the right thing" by throwing that garbage can through the window. Then he adds, "Not one person of color has ever asked me that question."⁷⁶ *Do the Right Thing* is a historically significant film that depicts the conflicts and tragedies of the time that so many other films avoided. Spike Lee made a controversial film that people talked about, debated, and even berated. This controversy shows the divisions that existed in American society over class and race, despite conservative attempts to ignore it.

Throughout the second half of the twentieth century, Americans made movie-going a pastime. Like television and popular music, the movies tell us about what people find interesting or exciting at any given time. On a deeper level, when we

⁷⁴ Dennis Sullivan and Fred Boehrer. "Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing*: Filmmaking in the American Grain" *Contemporary Justice Review* 6, no. 2 (2003): 146.

⁷⁵ Roger Ebert. *The Great Movies* (New York: Broadway Books, 2002), 139.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 139.

examine the films that were created throughout the years, we can learn much more about American culture.

During the second half of the twentieth century, the changing American landscape – a tweaking of society and the values and beliefs that defined it – was mirrored by the popular culture of the day. The government has changed its foreign policy, as reflected in science fiction movies in the 1950s, to a spoof military thriller in the 1960s, to reflective movies about war in the 1970s and 1980s. Americans' stance on race has changed as well. Movies seen as controversial due to their actors and subject matter in the 1960s seem tame when compared with a brave and insightful documentary made by a young African-American film director in the late eighties. By this time, Americans had changed their politics from the liberal, non-conforming youth, as portrayed by a couple of cross-country motorcyclists, to conservative heads of family trying to fit into middle-class America. Perhaps one thing that has not changed in American society or in the movies is the role of the teenager. Since 1950, the teenager has been portrayed as a slightly isolated, oftentimes rebellious youth seeking to be understood.

The films created from 1950 to 1990 can bring us a tremendous understanding not only of American popular culture, but of American society. As the dominant culture evolved, and values and norms with it, so did the films that were created. Mass media has always been a tool for understanding cultural history, and American films, unique in their independence from other elements of popular culture are an essential piece of the puzzle.

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- Rebel Without a Cause*, Directed by Nicholas Ray, Produced by David Weisbart. Warner Bros, 1955. **To be a Social Studies teacher in New York State...**

**Using Research on the History of the American Situation Comedy
And the History of American Film
To develop instruction in the United States History Classroom**

by

Mary K. Maslanka

Connecting Research to Teaching
SUNY Brockport
Final Thesis Project
Dr. Corey
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Throughout the process of training to be a social studies teacher, especially one at the high school level, we are constantly reminded that teaching history has become more than recalling the past and memorizing dates and facts. In our first few years of teaching, we are made aware that what teaching history certainly has become is preparing our students for high-stakes tests that evaluate what they have memorized. As teachers, we struggle to compromise these two expectations: one that tells us we must prepare our students to be well-informed, critical-thinking citizens, and the other that emphasizes success on standardized tests. Many teachers work to bring the two objectives together. With creativity and commitment, many find a way to promote both successful test-taking strategies and an interest in history for their students.

Teaching Regents United States History and Government to eleventh-graders in New York State means preparing them for the Regents Exam at the course's finish. Over the past decade, the exam has undergone a major face-lift, with new multiple choice writing sections that supposedly require analysis and critical thinking. Part one of the exam includes fifty multiple choice questions, many of which include graphs, tables, pictures, paintings, cartoons, government document excerpts and speech excerpts. This is meant to test the student's document analysis and comprehension level. The second part of the exam is the "thematic essay" which requires the students to write about the provided theme, using examples from across American History. Themes students may be asked to reflect on include: turning points, important individuals, reform movements, transportation, geography, and the media. The third part of the exam is the Document Based Question section in which students must examine several documents and answer questions about each (called scaffolding

questions). They are then required to answer an essay question, using the documents to support their arguments.

This relatively new format for the United States History and Government Regents exam reflects a change in teaching practices over the past two decades. A new emphasis is placed on utilizing primary sources in history, as experts claim that this better prepares our students to think critically about information they receive as citizens after graduation. New textbook editions have begun to include more speeches, editorials, and political cartoons. Teachers have developed strategies for teaching their students how to break down primary source materials. Regents exam review books advertise their regents practice sections, complete with practice Documents and accompanying essay questions. The study of primary sources has become a focal point in the teaching of American history. Any teacher concerned with student success on the Regents exam in New York State incorporates these and many more strategies into their classroom teaching.

To be a Teacher in Today's Diverse Classroom...

All of this emphasis on primary source analysis conveniently aligns itself with another theory in successful teaching strategies: using multiple intelligences in the classroom. Since Howard Gardner first introduced his list of multiple intelligences, most educators have embraced the idea that each student has different strengths. Teachers at all levels and of all disciplines are encouraged to utilize their students' intelligences to promote student success. In social studies education, multiple intelligences can be found in almost any classroom or lesson. Artistic intelligence can be used in creating a

poster that shows the important events of the civil rights movement. Interpersonal intelligence is utilized in a group project. Verbal/linguistic intelligence is shown-off in a debate on the Patriot Act. The opportunities to use multiple intelligences in social studies are limitless, and therefore, expected of teachers.

Combining the Theories on Best Practice...

If a history teacher practicing primary source analysis with his or her students thinks broadly about what is considered a primary source document, he or she will have the opportunity to utilize the many skills and abilities of his or her students as well. While the Regents Exam focuses on traditional documents such as photographs, speeches, and letters, classroom teachers should look to practice these analytical skills by going beyond what the Regents Exam includes.

When studying the twentieth century in American history, teachers refer to, but tend to spend little time on topics such as popular music, television shows, and feature films. Incorporating these elements of popular culture into lecture, student activities and assignments can accomplish the two major goals previously stated: preparing our students to be critically thinking citizens, and nurturing their success on the state exam.

Educators are encouraged to implement activities that include the use of multiple intelligences to engage our students in learning. But if we are going to use a song as a “hook” or a “bell-ringer” at the beginning of class, why not make it a song that has some historical significance, and can be used to support a point made in class? For example, if a theme students must be prepared to write about includes important turning points in history, and that student chooses to analyze and write about the Kent State Shootings,

that student would demonstrate an exemplary understanding of the event if he or she cited the song “Ohio” by Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young. We can provide these kinds of connections for our students.

What follows is a collection of ideas, lecture guides, resources, and sample that will encourage students in a United States History and Government classroom to analyze popular culture as important primary sources. Social studies teachers constantly emphasize the question “why is this important?” with their students. This collection is meant to allow other educators to reflect on how they might bring these kinds of primary sources into their own classrooms challenge their students to utilize them as historical documents.

If we can teach our students to watch a television show or movie with a critical eye, or listen to a song while taking an historical perspective, we might show them to offer these aspects of culture as proof of historical impact. Once we have accomplished this goal, we might see more than just student success on the Regents exam. We will have encouraged their growth as well-rounded citizens that ask questions about the messages their culture sends them, and considers the implications of those messages.

**Lecture Guides
and
Student Activities**

Using Popular Culture in the U.S. History Classroom: The 1950s

Teacher Materials and Student Activities

Topics:

1. The Cold War and McCarthyism
2. Post-World War II Society and the Baby-boom
3. Cultural Changes (the birth of Rock n' Roll)

Resources for the Classroom:

1. Film: Invasion of the Body Snatchers
 - Lecture Supplement
 - Film Analysis Activity
2. Television: Father Knows Best
 - Lecture Supplement
 - Viewing Guide Worksheet
3. Music: Elvis Presley
 - Song lyrics
 - Song analysis worksheet

Lecture Supplement: The 1950s and the Second Red Scare

Popular Culture Source:

Film: *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*

Release Date: 1956

Background Information:

As the Cold War developed through the 1950s, its impact on U.S. society became evident. Americans were consumed with the United States' conflict with the Soviet Union and the idea that Communist spies had infiltrated their country. Senator Joe McCarthy led the hunt for communists, targeting government and military officials, and Hollywood executives, filmmakers, and actors. While many Americans were enthralled with the subsequent hearings and saw McCarthy as a patriotic leader seeking to protect Americans, many accused him of leading a witch-hunt and criticized the government's betrayal of civil liberties in their search for communists.

Using the Source:

What students should already know: The term McCarthyism, and the rise and fall of McCarthy during this era. Individual stories such as Alger Hiss, Lucile Ball, and the Rosenbergs.

Before watching the film: Explain to the students that the story serves as an allegory about the Cold War and its impact on the United States. Tell them that there is a controversy as to the message of the film. Some people believe it serves as a warning to Americans to beware communist spies, while others think that it is criticizing the growing paranoia that resulted from the Cold War, such as the McCarthy hearings.

During the film: Have students complete a film analysis guide and decide what which allegory they think is present in the film.

Class Discussion:

Use the film analysis guide to generate a discussion on the symbolism and the message of the film. Ask students to provide historical examples from the era (previously covered in class) to support their argument for the purpose of the film.

Extension: *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* has been remade several times, most recently, as *Invasion*, released in 2007. Have students compare the remakes, and ask whether or not these films have relevancy for the time period in which they were made.

Where to find background information on the films:

- www.filmsite.org/filmh.html
- www.TCM.com
- http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/film_and_history/
- www.Rogerebert.com

Lecture Supplement: The 1950s and Post-War Society

Popular Culture Source:
Television Show: *Father Knows Best*
Episode: "Betty, Girl Engineer"
Airdate: April 11, 1956

Background Information:

After World War II, American men returned home to find a nation with more employment opportunities than when they left, and women were promptly sent back to the kitchen. Americans married at a staggering rate, and the country witnessed the largest population increase in its history between 1947 and 1952, known as the "baby-boom." Cultural implications of this demographic change were many: an increase in the need for schools, homes, cars, and home appliances. In addition to meeting the basic needs of growing families, toy and music industries would find that focusing on the baby-boom generation as their primary consumers would create a profit of historic proportions. As the Cold War began, Americans, settling into their new suburban homes and lifestyles, placed a renewed emphasis on conformity and family values. This emphasis was reflected in the popular culture of the period, including in television programs.

Using the Source:

Father Knows Best is one of the most well-known shows of the era. Even its title speaks volumes about the messages it sent in its weekly episodes. The show was about the Andersons, a nuclear family living in middle-class suburbia. Mr. and Mrs. Anderson had two children, Bud and Betty. The episode, "Betty, Girl Engineer" does a wonderful job showing the family values and gender roles that dominated post-war American society. In this episode, Betty shocks her friends, family, and teachers by declaring her interest in pursuing the field of engineering, and signing up for a program for high school students interested in learning more about the profession. She insists that her gender doesn't matter and is determined to fight gender stereotypes. By the end of the episode, however, Betty realizes that her parents were right, and that engineering is no job for a proper girl. The story ends "happily" as Betty's new love interest is the college student who put her in her place by telling her she should not be an engineer.

During the episode – provide students with the viewing guide for *Father Knows Best*.

Class Discussion:

After viewing the episode – generate a class discussion using the viewing guide questions. Ask students about the major cultural differences they noticed when comparing the 1950s to their lives. Emphasize the differences in gender roles by asking the students about the message the episode sent about appropriate behavior for boys and girls. Finally, have the class analyze this as a primary source document: what did they learn about the 1950s they might now have known before watching the episode?

Where to find background information on the films:

- Website: <http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/>
- Website: www.tv.com
- Website: <http://www.sitcomsonline.com/>

Heartbreak Hotel (1956)

(Mae B. Axton - Tommy Durden - Elvis Presley)

Well, since my baby left me,
I found a new place to dwell.
It's down at the end of lonely street
at Heartbreak Hotel.

You make me so lonely baby,
I get so lonely,
I get so lonely I could die.

And although it's always crowded,
you still can find some room.
Where broken hearted lovers
do cry away their gloom.

You make me so lonely baby,
I get so lonely,
I get so lonely I could die.

Well, the Bell hop's tears keep flowin',
and the desk clerk's dressed in black.
Well they been so long on lonely street
They ain't ever gonna look back.

You make me so lonely baby,
I get so lonely,
I get so lonely I could die.

Hey now, if your baby leaves you,
and you got a tale to tell.
Just take a walk down lonely street
to Heartbreak Hotel.

Blue Suede Shoes (1956)

(Carl Perkins)

Well, it's one for the money,
Two for the show,
Three to get ready,
Now go, cat, go.

But don't you step on my blue suede shoes.
You can do anything but lay off of my Blue suede shoes.

Well, you can knock me down,
Step in my face,
Slander my name
All over the place.

Do anything that you want to do, but uh-uh,
Honey, lay off of my shoes
Don't you step on my Blue suede shoes.
You can do anything but lay off of my blue suede shoes.

You can burn my house,
Steal my car,
Drink my liquor
From an old fruitjar.

Do anything that you want to do, but uh-uh,
Honey, lay off of my shoes
Don't you step on my blue suede shoes.
You can do anything but lay off of my blue suede shoes.

Hound Dog (1956)

(Jerry Leiber - Mike Stoller)

You ain't nothin' but a hound dog
cryin' all the time.

You ain't nothin' but a hound dog
cryin' all the time.

Well, you ain't never caught a rabbit
and you ain't no friend of mine.

When they said you was high classed,
well, that was just a lie.

When they said you was high classed,
well, that was just a lie.

You ain't never caught a rabbit
and you ain't no friend of mine.

Jailhouse Rock (1957)

(Jerry Leiber - Mike Stoller)

The warden threw a party in the county jail.
 The prison band was there and they began to wail.
 The band was jumpin' and the joint began to swing.
 You should've heard those knocked out jailbirds sing.
 Let's rock, everybody, let's rock.
 Everybody in the whole cell block
 was dancin' to the Jailhouse Rock.

Spider Murphy played the tenor saxophone,
 Little Joe was blowin' on the slide trombone.
 The drummer boy from Illinois went crash, boom, bang,
 the whole rhythm section was the Purple Gang.
 Let's rock, everybody, let's rock.
 Everybody in the whole cell block
 was dancin' to the Jailhouse Rock.

Number forty-seven said to number three:
 "You're the cutest jailbird I ever did see.
 I sure would be delighted with your company,
 come on and do the Jailhouse Rock with me."
 Let's rock, everybody, let's rock.
 Everybody in the whole cell block
 was dancin' to the Jailhouse Rock.

The sad sack was a sittin' on a block of stone
 way over in the corner weepin' all alone.
 The warden said, "Hey, buddy, don't you be no square.
 If you can't find a partner use a wooden chair."
 Let's rock, everybody, let's rock.
 Everybody in the whole cell block
 was dancin' to the Jailhouse Rock.

Shifty Henry said to Bugs, "For Heaven's sake,
 no one's lookin', now's our chance to make a break."
 Bugsy turned to Shifty and he said, "Nix nix,
 I wanna stick around a while and get my kicks."
 Let's rock, everybody, let's rock.
 Everybody in the whole cell block
 was dancin' to the Jailhouse Rock.

G.I. Blues (1957)

(Sid Tepper - Roy Bennett)

They give us a room
 with a view of the beautiful Rhine
 They give us a room
 with a view of the beautiful Rhine
 Gimme a muddy old creek
 in Texas any old time
 I've got those hup, two, three, four
 occupation G.I. Blues
 From my G.I. hair to the heels of my G.I. shoes
 And if I don't go stateside soon
 I'm gonna blow my fuse
 We get hasenpfeffer
 and black pumpnickel for chow
 We get hasenpfeffer
 and black pumpnickel for chow
 I'd blow my next month's pay
 for a slice of Texas cow
 We'd like to be heroes,
 but all we do here is march
 We'd like to be heroes,
 but all we do here is march
 And they don't give the Purple Heart
 for a fallen arch
 I've got those hup, two, three, four
 occupation G.I. Blues
 From my G.I. hair to the heels of my G.I. shoes
 And if I don't go stateside soon
 I'm gonna blow my fuse
 The frauleins are pretty as flowers
 But we can't make a pass
 The frauleins are pretty as flowers
 But we can't make a pass
 Cause they're all wearin' signs saying:
 "Keepen sie off the grass"
 I've got those hup, two, three, four
 occupation G.I. Blues
 From my G.I. hair to the heels of my G.I. shoes
 And if I don't go stateside soon
 I'm gonna blow my fuse

Elvis and Teenage Culture

Directions:

Using the lyrics and the music provided to your group, analyze this Elvis song as a primary source document that can tell you more about the 1950s. Answer the following questions based on the song and your knowledge of history, and be prepared to present your findings to the class.

1. How would you describe the rhythm and mood of this song?
2. What lyrics would have made this appealing to teenagers? Why?
3. What lyrics would have made this song appalling to parents and other older Americans? Why?
4. How does this song represent a new generation and changing values in America?
5. Can you compare this song and its lyrics and/or music to any popular song today, based on its popularity, message, or the controversy surrounding the singer? Explain your answer.

Using Popular Culture in the U.S. History Classroom: The 1960s

Teacher Materials and Student Activities

Topics:

1. The Cold War and the Arms Race
2. The Counterculture and the Anti-war Movement
3. The Civil Rights Movement

Resources for the Classroom:

1. Film: *Dr. Strangelove, or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*
 - Student assignment: "How America Learned to Love the Bomb" – script analysis activity
2. Music: Songs of the 1960s
 - Song lyrics
 - Song analysis guide
 - Group activity
3. Films: *In the Heat of the Night* and *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*
 - Lecture Supplement
 - Film Analysis Activity

How America Learned to Love the Bomb: The Cold War and the Arms Race

Background:

In our study of the Cold War, we have defined and discussed several terms and events that describe this era of American History.

Some are used to describe American foreign policy toward the Soviet Union during the Cold War. They are:

- Arms race
- Space race
- Alliances (NATO, Warsaw Pact)
- Massive retaliation
- Mutually assured destruction
- H-Bomb
- A-Bomb
- Sputnik
- Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (1963, 1967)
- Hot Line

Our discussion of Cold War- era foreign and domestic policy also included the growing paranoia about and obsession with Communism and the arms race. Dr. Strangelove, a dark comedy released in 1964, addresses these aspects of the Cold War.

Assignment:

1. View the selected scenes from the film with the rest of the class and study the attached quotes from the movie.
2. Fill out the film analysis guide based on the scenes you watched.
3. In a short essay (a few paragraphs), explain Stanley Kubrick's views on the Cold War, and be sure to:
 - Use terms from the list above
 - Provide evidence from the film or the quotes.

Primary Source:*Dr. Strangelove, or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964)

Producer / Director : Stanley Kubrick

Background:

In the face of universal destruction and "mass murder," General Turgidson, who believes that conquest in war is equated to sexual defeat, rants about the tremendous 'overkill' potential of the nuclear offensive. He also minimizes the Soviet retaliatory counter-attack casualty statistics:

Mr. President, I'm not saying we wouldn't get our hair mussed, but I do say no more than ten to twenty million killed, tops, uh, depending on the breaks.

- *Dr. Strangelove, 1964*

Background:

In the echoing chamber of the War Room, the Russian ambassador describes the effects of the lethal, automatic Doomsday Machine if triggered by a nuclear bomb attack inside Russia. It would destroy all human and animal life on Earth and enshroud the planet in a 93-year radioactive cloud, and it could also go off if any attempts are made to disengage it:

When it is detonated, it will produce enough lethal radioactive fallout so that within ten months, the surface of the Earth will be as dead as the moon!...When they are exploded, they will produce a Doomsday shroud. A lethal cloud of radioactivity which will encircle the earth for ninety-three years!...It is not anything a sane man would do. The Doomsday Machine is designed to trigger itself automatically...It is designed to explode if any attempt is ever made to untrigger it...

-*Dr. Strangelove, 1964*

Background:

Although Turgidson calls the machine "a load of Commie bull" and "an obvious Commie trick" (He walks backwards toward the Big Board, falls over backwards, somersaults, and lands back on his feet!) and the President labels it "absolute madness," the Ambassador also explains the economic considerations for its construction:

There were those of us who fought against us. But in the end, we could not keep up with the expense involved in the arms race, the space race, and the peace race. And at the same time, our people grumbled for more nylons and washing machines. Our Doomsday scheme cost us just a small fraction of what we'd been spending on defense in a single year. But the deciding factor was when we learned that your country was working along similar lines, and we were afraid of a Doomsday gap...Our source was the *New York Times*...

-*Dr. Strangelove, 1964*

Aquarius / Let the Sunshine In

The 5th Dimension

1969

When the moon is in the Seventh House
 And Jupiter aligns with Mars
 Then peace will guide the planets
 And love will steer the stars
 This is the dawning of the age of Aquarius
 Age of Aquarius
 Aquarius!
 Aquarius!

Harmony and understanding
 Sympathy and trust abounding
 No more falsehoods or derisions
 Golden living dreams of visions
 Mystic crystal revelation
 And the mind's true liberation
 Aquarius!
 Aquarius!

When the moon is in the Seventh House
 And Jupiter aligns with Mars
 Then peace will guide the planets
 And love will steer the stars
 This is the dawning of the age of Aquarius
 Age of Aquarius
 Aquarius!
 Aquarius!
 Aquarius!
 Aquarius!

Let the sunshine, let the sunshine in, the sunshine in
 Let the sunshine, let the sunshine in, the sunshine in
 Let the sunshine, let the sunshine in, the sunshine in
 Oh, let it shine, c'mon
 Now everybody just sing along
 Let the sun shine in
 Open up your heart and let it shine on in
 When you are lonely, let it shine on
 Got to open up your heart and let it shine on in
 And when you feel like you've been mistreated
 And your friends turn away
 Just open your heart, and shine it on in

For What it's Worth

Buffalo Springfield

1966

There's somethin' happenin' here.
 What it is ain't exactly clear.
 There's a man with a gun over there
 A-tellin' me I've got to beware.
 I think it's time we stop.
 Children, what's that sound?
 Everybody look what's goin' down.
 There's battle lines bein' drawn.
 Nobody's right if everybody's wrong.
 Young people speakin' their minds
 A-gettin' so much resistance from behind.
 I think it's time we stop.
 Hey, what's that sound?
 Everybody look what's goin' down.
 What a field day for the heat.
 A thousand people in the street
 Singin' songs and a-carryin' signs
 Mostly sayin' hooray for our side.
 It's time we stop.
 Hey, what's that sound?
 Everybody look what's goin' down.
 Paranoia strikes deep.
 Into your life it will creep.
 It starts when you're always afraid.
 Step out of line, the men come and take you away.
 You better stop.
 Hey, what's that sound?
 Everybody look what's goin'..
 You better stop.
 Hey, what's that sound?
 Everybody look what's goin'..
 You better stop.
 Now, what's that sound?
 Everybody look what's goin'..
 You better stop.
 Children, what's that sound?
 Everybody look what's goin'..

The Times, They are A-Changin'

Bob Dylan (1964)

Come gather round people
 Wherever you roam
 And admit that the waters
 Around you have grown
 And accept it that soon
 You'll be drenched to the bone.
 If your time to you
 Is worth savin'
 Then you better start swimmin'
 Or you'll sink like a stone
 For the times they are a-changin'.
 Come writers and critics
 Who prophesize with your pen
 And keep your eyes wide
 The chance wont come again
 And don't speak too soon
 For the wheels still in spin
 And there's no tellin' who
 That its namin'.
 For the loser now
 Will be later to win
 For the times they are a-changin'.
 Come senators, congressmen
 Please heed the call
 Don't stand in the doorway
 Don't block up the hall
 For he that gets hurt
 Will be he who has stalled
 There's a battle outside
 And it is ragin'.
 It'll soon shake your windows
 And rattle your walls
 For the times they are a-changin'.
 Come mothers and fathers
 Throughout the land
 And don't criticize
 What you cant understand
 Your sons and your daughters
 Are beyond your command
 Your old road is
 Rapidly agin'.
 Please get out of the new one
 If you cant lend your hand
 For the times they are a-changin'.
 The line it is drawn
 The curse it is cast
 The slow one now
 Will later be fast
 As the present now
 Will later be past
 The order is
 Rapidly fadin'.
 And the first one now
 Will later be last
 For the times they are a-changin'.

Big Yellow Taxi

Joni Mitchell

1970

They paved paradise
And put up a parking lot
With a pink hotel, a boutique
And a swinging hot spot
Don't it always seem to go
That you don't know what you've got
Till its gone

They paved paradise
And put up a parking lot
They took all the trees
Put 'em in a tree museum
And they charged the people
A dollar and a half just to see 'em
Don't it always seem to go
That you don't know what you've got
Till its gone

They paved paradise
And put up a parking lot
Hey farmer, farmer
Put away that DDT now
Give me spots on my apples
But leave me the birds and the bees
Please!

Don't it always seem to go
That you don't know what you've got
Till its gone

They paved paradise
And put up a parking lot
Late last night
I heard the screen door slam
And a big yellow taxi
Took away my old man
Don't it always seem to go
That you don't know what you've got
Till its gone

They paved paradise
And put up a parking lot

Fortunate Son

Creedence Clearwater Revival

1969

Some folks are born made to wave the flag,
Ooh, they're red, white and blue.
And when the band plays hail to the chief,
Ooh, they point the cannon at you, lord,

It ain't me, it ain't me, I ain't no senators son, son.
It ain't me, it ain't me; I ain't no fortunate one, no,

Yeah!

Some folks are born silver spoon in hand,
Lord, don't they help themselves, oh.
But when the taxman comes to the door,
Lord, the house looks like a rummage sale, yes,

It ain't me, it ain't me, I ain't no millionaires son, no.
It ain't me, it ain't me; I ain't no fortunate one, no.

Some folks inherit star spangled eyes,
Ooh, they send you down to war, lord,
And when you ask them, how much should we give?
Ooh, they only answer more! more! more!

It ain't me, it ain't me, I ain't no military son, son.
It ain't me, it ain't me; I ain't no fortunate one, one.

It ain't me, it ain't me, I ain't no fortunate one, no no no,
It ain't me, it ain't me, I ain't no fortunate son, no no no,

Woodstock

Joni Mitchell

1969

I came upon a child of god
 He was walking along the road
 And I asked him, where are you going
 And this he told me
 I'm going on down to Yasgur's farm
 I'm going to join in a rock n roll band
 I'm going to camp out on the land
 I'm going to try an get my soul free
 We are stardust
 We are golden
 And we've got to get ourselves
 Back to the garden

Then can I walk beside you
 I have come here to lose the smog
 And I feel to be a cog in something turning
 Well maybe it is just the time of year
 Or maybe its the time of man
 I don't know who I am
 But you know life is for learning
 We are stardust
 We are golden
 And we've got to get ourselves
 Back to the garden

By the time we got to Woodstock
 We were half a million strong
 And everywhere there was song and celebration
 And I dreamed I saw the bombers
 Riding shotgun in the sky
 And they were turning into butterflies
 Above our nation
 We are stardust
 Billion year old carbon
 We are golden
 Caught in the devils bargain
 And we've got to get ourselves
 Back to the garden

Blowin' in the Wind

Bob Dylan
1963

How many roads must a man walk down
Before you call him a man?
Yes, and how many seas must a white dove sail
Before she sleeps in the sand?
Yes, and how many times must the cannon balls fly
Before they're forever banned?
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind,
The answer is blowin' in the wind.

How many times must a man look up
Before he can see the sky?
Yes, and how many ears must one man have
Before he can hear people cry?
Yes, and how many deaths will it take till he knows
That too many people have died?
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind,
The answer is blowin' in the wind.

How many years can a mountain exist
Before its washed to the sea?
Yes, and how many years can some people exist
Before they're allowed to be free?
Yes, and how many times can a man turn his head,
Pretending he just doesn't see?
The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind,
The answer is blowin' in the wind.

Scarborough Fair / Canticle

Simon and Garfunkel

1965

Are you going to Scarborough fair?
Parsley, sage, rosemary & thyme
Remember me to one who lives there
She once was a true love of mine

Tell her to make me a cambric shirt
(on the side of a hill in the deep forest green)
Parsley, sage, rosemary & thyme
(tracing a sparrow on snow-crested ground)
Without no seams nor needlework
(blankets and bedclothes a child of the mountains)
Then shall be a true love of mine
(sleeps unaware of the clarion call)

Tell her to find me an acre of land
(on the side of a hill, a sprinkling of leaves)
Parsley, sage, rosemary, & thyme
(washes the grave with silvery tears)
Between the salt water and the sea strand
(a soldier cleans and polishes a gun)
Then shall be a true love of mine

Tell her to reap it in a sickle of leather
(war bellows, blazing in scarlet battalions)
Parsley, sage, rosemary & thyme
(generals order their soldiers to kill)
And to gather it all in a bunch of heather
(and to fight for a cause they've long ago forgotten)
Then shall be a true love of mine

Are you going to Scarborough fair?
Parsley, sage, rosemary & thyme
Remember me to one who lives there
She once was a true love of mine

1960s Counterculture: Popular Music as a Primary Source Group Activity

Directions:

Group Responsibility - Your group will be assigned a song from the 1960s. Your job will be to read and analyze it, and complete the song analysis worksheet. You will then present it to the class as a primary source document and give an explanation as to why it is an historically significant work.

Individual Responsibility – You will be responsible for taking notes on each of the groups' presentations (see attached sheet).

Songs:

- Aquarius, The Fifth Dimension
- For What it's Worth – Buffalo Springfield
- Fortunate Son – Creedence Clearwater Revival
- Big Yellow Taxi – Joni Mitchell
- Scarborough Fair – Simon and Garfunkel
- The Times, they are a Changin' – Bob Dylan
- Woodstock – Joni Mitchell
- Blowin' in the Wind – Bob Dylan

Popular Music as a Primary Source

Individual Notes

Aquarius, The Fifth Dimension

- Date:
- Topic:
- Historical significance:

For What it's Worth – Buffalo Springfield

- Date:
- Topic:
- Historical significance:

Fortunate Son – Creedence Clearwater Revival

- Date:
- Topic:
- Historical significance:

Big Yellow Taxi – Joni Mitchell

- Date:
- Topic:
- Historical significance:

Scarborough Fair – Simon and Garfunkel

- Date:
- Topic:
- Historical significance:

The Times, they are a Changin' – Bob Dylan

- Date:
- Topic:
- Historical significance:

Woodstock – Joni Mitchell

- Date:
- Topic:
- Historical significance:

Blowin' in the Wind – Bob Dylan

- Date:
- Topic:
- Historical significance:

Primary Source Document Analysis Song Interpretation Guide

Step 1: Identify the song –

- Title
- Writer:
- Artist:
- Year:

Step 2: Describe the time period in which the song was written:

- Major Events:
- Conflicts:
- Groups:

Step 3: List important words/phrases in the song:

-
-
-
-
-

Step 4: Analyze –

What is the symbolic meaning of the words?

What story does the song tell?

Step 5: Compare / Contrast –

Name one song this song is similar to:

Describe the similarity:

Name one song this song is different than:

Describe what makes them different:

Step 5: Evaluate –

What can this song tell us about the time period in which it was written / performed?

Why is this song historically significant?

Lecture Supplement: The 1960s and Civil Rights

Popular Culture Source:

Films: *In the Heat of the Night*, *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*

Release Date: 1967

Background Information:

In the 1960s, still inadequate rights for African-Americans, especially in the South, and the subsequent civil rights movement resulted in growing racial tensions across the country. While many film-makers ignored the controversy, electing to create a film that would appeal to, not alienate, a large audience, a few films during the decade met the issue head-on. *In the Heat of the Night* and *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, both starring the popular film actor Sydney Poitier, were among these rare creations.

Using the Source:

Teachers may choose to show one film over the other, or clips from both in order to compare and contrast. Students should already have a general understanding of the struggles and efforts of the Civil Rights Movement, and some of the major events of the movement, including Freedom Summer, the Freedom Rides, and some of the racially-motivated violence of the decade.

- To prepare students with background information on the films, teachers can provide students with information from the websites listed below.
- To promote critical thinking while viewing the film(s), provide students with a film analysis guide.

Class Discussion:

Use the film analysis guide to generate a class discussion on the story told in each film, placing special emphasis on the controversial subject area they addressed for the time period. Ask the students to analyze the film as an historical document. For example, ask the students what they would learn about the civil rights movement if they had no background information, from watching these movies. Have the students come to a conclusion as to why these films are historically significant.

Where to find background information on the films:

- www.filmsite.org/filmh.html
- www.TCM.com
- http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/film_and_history/
- www.Rogerebert.com

Using Popular Culture in the U.S. History Classroom: The 1970s

Teacher Materials and Student Activities

Topics:

1. Richard Nixon and the "Silent Majority"
2. The Vietnam War
3. The Anti-war Movement and the Kent State Shootings

Resources for the Classroom:

1. Television: *All in the Family*
 - Lecture Supplement
 - "Those Were the Days" lyrics and document analysis
2. Film: *Apocalypse Now*
 - Lecture Supplement
 - Film Analysis Guide
3. Music: *Ohio*, Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young
 - Song analysis guide

Lecture Supplement: The 1970s and Nixon's "Silent Majority"

Popular Culture Source:
Television Show: *All in the Family*
Episode: "Sammy's Visit"
Airdate: 1972

Background Information:

In the 1970s, Richard Nixon claimed to support what he called the "silent majority" of Americans. He believed that these white, working and middle-class, Protestant, conservative people represented the majority of Americans and that they needed a voice. Nixon served as the voice of these Americans on several issues. They were concerned with the emphasis on expanding civil rights to minority groups, attempts on the part of school districts to force school integration by bussing, and the lack of support for the war effort in Vietnam. Nixon claimed that although younger Americans, such as anti-war college protesters got most of the media's attention, the majority of Americans still believed in and practiced traditional American values.

Using the Source:

To demonstrate the concept of the "silent majority" and the growing clash over American values, introduce the popular 1970s sitcom, *All in the Family*. The show's main character, Archie Bunker, represents a typical "silent majority" citizen. In fact, Archie is a working-class, Protestant American that makes enough sexist and racist remarks to be classified as a bigot. Any episode of *All in the Family* will clearly outline Archie's belief and value system, however, the episode "Sammy's Visit" in which Sammy Davis, Jr. visits the Bunker household is especially poignant. Known as one of the all-time classic episodes, it demonstrates the racist undertones in Archie's personality, and pokes fun at his hypocrisy as a fan of Sammy's.

Class Discussion:

Before viewing the episode - Tell the students that producer Norman Lear was considered a comic genius for his work on *All in the Family*, because while many Americans understood that Archie's bigotry was tongue and cheek, some held him up as the ideal American, and faithfully followed the sitcom, believing Archie was the quintessential hard-working, under-respected, under-appreciated American man.

After viewing the episode - Ask the students what someone in Nixon's "silent majority" might find appealing about Archie Bunker. Then ask why a liberal American might find the show appealing.

Where to find information, background, and clips of the show:

- The book, *Stay Tuned: Television's Unforgettable Moments* by John Garner includes a DVD with episode clips and background information. The first disc includes clips from the episode, "Sammy's Visit" and the book contains pictures from the show, and biographical information on the cast and Director, Norman Lear.
- Website: <http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/>
- Website: www.tv.com
- Website: <http://www.sitcomsonline.com/>

Primary Source:***Those were the Days***

(Theme from *All in the Family*)

By Lee Adams and Charles Stause

Boy the way Glen Miller played,

Songs that made the hit parade

Guys like us, we had it made

Those were the days.

And you know where you were then

Girls were girls and men were men

Mister we could use a man like Herbert Hoover again

Didn't need no welfare states

Everybody pulled his weight

Gee, our old LaSalle ran great

Those were the days!

Discussion Questions:

1. What words in the song give you an idea of the popular culture (style, products, etc) valued by the older generation in the 1970s?
2. What words in the song give you an idea of the political beliefs of the older generation in the 1970s?
3. Based on your knowledge of United States history, how do these beliefs differ from the ones held by younger people in the 1970s?
4. List and describe at least two examples from your study of United States history that demonstrate this generational conflict during this decade:
5. List and describe at least one example of this generational conflict from the show:

Lecture Supplement: The Vietnam War

Popular Culture Source:
Film: *Apocalypse Now*
Release Date: 1979

Background Information:

The Vietnam War is generally taught separate from other events of the 1960s and 1970s, as it spans three decades (1950s-1970s) and the foreign policies of presidents from Truman to Ford. It encompasses topics such as imperialism, the Cold War, generational conflict, the anti-war movement, military power, and governmental issues such as checks and balances. Many teachers choose to break up their instruction on the Vietnam War into topics of causes, the nature of war, and the impact of the war at home.

Using the Source:

Apocalypse Now can be used to supplement a lesson on the nature of war, or on the GI experience during the war. It is especially useful if students have read Joseph Conrad's, *Heart of Darkness*, as Director Francis Ford Coppola based the film on that story. If students have read the book, the film's symbolic nature will be all the more evident, and a discussion of imperialism may be necessary in addition to the class' study of Vietnam specifically. If showing the entire film, student use of the film analysis guide will be necessary in order to organize the many characters, symbolic references, and story lines.

Class Discussion:

If the class views the entire film and utilizes the analysis worksheet, the teacher may wish to use the analysis to guide the class discussion, focusing on ideas such as the story told and the symbolism represented. The teacher would want to place emphasis on the question of the film's historical significance as a source on Vietnam. Teachers may also choose to show the film, or clips from the film, in order to provide students with a more basic understanding of what the war was like. In this case, the teacher should focus on: the diversity of the GIs (in a working-class war), the struggles they faced, and some of the atrocities of war. (For this last topic, the teacher may wish to ask the students what they found surprising or disturbing in the film). For example, the quote, "I love the smell of napalm in the morning" is likely to create a discussion.

Where to find background information on the films:

- www.filmsite.org/filmh.html
- www.TCM.com
- http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/film_and_history/
- www.Rogerebert.com

Ohio

Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young
1974

Tin soldiers and Nixon coming,
We're finally on our own.
This summer I hear the drumming,
Four dead in Ohio.

Gotta get down to it
Soldiers are gunning us down
Should have been done long ago.
What if you knew her
And found her dead on the ground
How can you run when you know?

Gotta get down to it
Soldiers are gunning us down
Should have been done long ago.
What if you knew her
And found her dead on the ground
How can you run when you know?

Tin soldiers and Nixon coming,
We're finally on our own.
This summer I hear the drumming,
Four dead in Ohio.

Primary Source Document Analysis Song Interpretation Guide

Step 1: Identify the song –

- Title
- Writer:
- Artist:
- Year:

Step 2: Describe the time period in which the song was written:

- Major Events:
- Conflicts:
- Groups:

Step 3: List important words/phrases in the song:

-
-
-
-
-

Step 4: Analyze –

What is the symbolic meaning of the words?

What story does the song tell?

Step 5: Compare / Contrast –

Name one song this song is similar to:

Describe the similarity:

Name one song this song is different than:

Describe what makes them different:

Step 5: Evaluate –

What can this song tell us about the time period in which it was written / performed?

Why is this song historically significant?

Using Popular Culture in the U.S. History Classroom: The 1980s

Teacher Materials and Student Activities

Topics:

- i. The Conservative Tide and Family Values
- ii. Race Relations in the 1980s

Resources for the Classroom:

1. Television: *Murphy Brown*
 - Document Analysis – Scaffolding Questions
 - Primary Source – TIME article and 3-2-1 Activity
2. Film: *Do the Right Thing*
 - Document Analysis – Scaffolding Questions
3. Music: *Fight the Power*, Public Enemy
 - Song analysis guide

1980s – Conservative Tide

Background:

In 1992, the popular television sitcom, *Murphy Brown* made headlines and created controversy over its storyline. The main character, Murphy, a female anchor on a national news program, became pregnant out of wedlock. Using the fictional story as a talking point in a speech, Vice President Dan Quayle made the following remark:

Primary Source:

Bearing babies irresponsibly is wrong...it doesn't help matters when primetime TV has Murphy Brown, a character who supposedly epitomizes today's intelligent, highly paid professional woman, mocking the importance of fathers by bearing a child alone and calling it just another lifestyle choice.

-Dan Quayle, Vice President of the United States, May 19th, 1992

Discussion Questions:

1. In this example, what is Vice President Quayle arguing for or against?
2. Using your knowledge of United States history (in the 1980s and 1990s), how does his example support the beliefs and values of Conservatism under both President Reagan and President H.W. Bush?
3. Could today's President make a similar argument about television? Provide examples to support your argument.
4. Do you agree with Quayle's argument? Why or why not?

Source:
TIME Magazine, Monday, Jun. 01, 1992

Dan Quayle vs. Murphy Brown

IF FOR NOTHING ELSE, DAN QUAYLE DESERVES POINTS for audacity. In modern America taking on a popular TV character, even a fictional one, is politically more precarious than taking a clear stand on a substantive campaign issue. And yet the Vice President dared to argue last week in a San Francisco speech that the Los Angeles riots were caused in part by a "poverty of values" that included the acceptance of unwed motherhood, as celebrated in popular culture by the CBS comedy series *Murphy Brown*. The title character, a divorced news anchorwoman, got pregnant and chose to have the baby, a boy, who was delivered on last Monday's episode, watched by 38 million Americans. "It doesn't help matters," Quayle complained, when Brown, "a character who supposedly epitomizes today's intelligent, highly paid professional woman" is portrayed as "mocking the importance of fathers, by bearing a child alone, and calling it just another 'life-style choice.' "

Quayle, aides explained, meant to "stir a debate" over "family values" and Hollywood's treatment of them. And so he did. A New York Daily News headline set the tone: QUAYLE TO MURPHY BROWN: YOU TRAMP! Switchboards at the White House and on TV and radio talk shows lit up with callers, pro and con. Carl Rowan, a liberal black columnist, sided with Quayle, while Hillary Clinton, wife of the Democratic presidential contender, panned him as typical of "an Administration out of touch with America" and its growing ranks of single mothers.

Other critics suspected that the Vice President's remarks fit into a calculated strategy to suggest that L.A.'s rioters, who were mostly black and Hispanic, have in common with feminists and other Democrats a shoddier moral standard than nice people (who therefore should vote Republican). But Quayle denied any such intention, and the subsequent flip-flopping by the White House looked anything but calculated. Press secretary Marlin Fitzwater at first criticized *Murphy Brown* for "the glorification of life as an unwed mother," then later told reporters that the TV character was "demonstrating pro-life values which we think are good." That in turn brought an angry denial from Quayle, who, in some backpedaling of his own, insisted that he had "the greatest respect" for single mothers.

President Bush, who can read a Nielsen rating as well as an opinion poll, declined to criticize "a very popular television show." He praised Quayle's speech in a private call to the Vice President, but failed to adopt the message as his own. Throughout the improbable spectacle of a White House pitted against a sitcom character and her real-life defenders, there was a serious undercurrent. The growth in fatherless families, after all, is encouraged less by television than by welfare policies that punish poor mothers who marry -- policies that Bush and Quayle should change if they are serious about this subject.

TIME Article: Dan Quayle vs. Murphy Brown

3-2-1 Activity

Directions: Use the TIME article on the Muprhy Brown/Dan Quayle debate to complete a 3-2-1 activity.

THREE THINGS I LEARNED:

1.

2.

3.

TWO THINGS I WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT:

1.

2.

ONE THING THAT WILL STICK WITH ME:

1.

Scaffolding Questions: Quote Analysis Practice

Topic: Racial tensions and Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing* (1989)

"If Lee does hook large black audiences, there's a good chance the message they take from the film will increase racial tensions in the city."

-Joe Klein, New York Magazine, 1989

According to Joe Klein, what problems might the film "Do the Right Thing" cause?

"The only thing that really hurts are those articles that are saying that 'Do the Right Thing' is going to cause riots. 'Do the Right Thing' was not showing the week of the Super Bowl in Liberty City." [Miami neighborhood where rioting erupted last winter.] "To my knowledge, what happened there was that a cop killed a black kid on a motorcycle who supposedly had robbed someone. That's what started the riot. Better talk about the conditions that make things like that happen."

-Spike Lee (response to reviews), 1989

What does Spike Lee say is the real racial problem in the United States?

"I want to address the question of the incendiary nature of the film. I think that is the importance of the ambiguity--not only at the end, but throughout. He could have made a coercive movie that would show only one side of all the larger questions here, but he didn't. This is a porous movie, this is a movie about choices. The moviegoer is even left with a choice, put there literally through the two quotes of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King. That's why it's not, I think, incendiary. It allows you to bring choice and interpretation to it. And that's what I think will keep it from causing social problems in the hot summer."

-Henry Louis Gates, Jr., 1989

What argument does Dr. Gates provide in his defense of Spike Lee and the movie, "Do the Right Thing"?

Fight the Power

Public Enemy (1989)

1989 the number another summer (get down)
 Sound of the funky drummer
 Music hittin' your heart cause I know you got sould
 (Brothers and sisters hey)
 Listen if you're missin' y'all
 Swingin' while I'm singin'
 Givin' whatcha gettin'
 Knowin' what I know
 While the Black bands sweatin'
 And the rhythm rhymes rollin'
 Got to give us what we want
 Gotta give us what we need
 Our freedom of speech is freedom or death
 We got to fight the powers that be
 Lemme hear you say
 Fight the power
 As the rhythm designed to bounce
 What counts is that the rhymes
 Designed to fill your mind
 Now that you've realized the prides arrived
 We got to pump the stuff to make us tough
 from the heart
 It's a start, a work of art
 To revolutionize make a change nothin's strange
 People, people we are the same
 No we're not the same
 Cause we don't know the game
 What we need is awareness, we can't get careless
 You say what is this?
 My beloved lets get down to business
 Mental self defensive fitness
 (Yo) bum rush the show
 You gotta go for what you know
 Make everybody see, in order to fight the powers that be
 Lemme hear you say...
 Fight the Power
 Elvis was a hero to most
 But he never meant ---- to me you see
 Straight up racist that sucker was
 Simple and plain
 Mother---- him and John Wayne
 Cause I'm Black and I'm proud
 I'm ready and hyped plus I'm amped
 Most of my heroes don't appear on no stamps
 Sample a look back you look and find
 Nothing but rednecks for 400 years if you check
 Don't worry be happy
 Was a number one jam
 Damn if I say it you can slap me right here
 (Get it) lets get this party started right
 Right on, c'mon
 What we got to say
 Power to the people no delay
 To make everybody see
 In order to fight the powers that be
 (Fight the Power)

Primary Source Document Analysis Song Interpretation Guide

Step 1: Identify the song –

- Title
- Writer:
- Artist:
- Year:

Step 2: Describe the time period in which the song was written:

- Major Events:
- Conflicts:
- Groups:

Step 3: List important words/phrases in the song:

-
-
-
-
-

Step 4: Analyze –

What is the symbolic meaning of the words?

What story does the song tell?

Step 5: Compare / Contrast –

Name one song this song is similar to:

Describe the similarity:

Name one song this song is different than:

Describe what makes them different:

Step 5: Evaluate –

What can this song tell us about the time period in which it was written / performed?

Why is this song historically significant?

Student-Created Document Based Question

United States History and Government Assessment

Background:

Over the past semester of this course, you have worked with primary source documents that have enriched your knowledge of American History, and allowed you to become a more well-informed, well-equipped citizen. You have mastered the art of interpreting primary source documents such as articles, editorials, songs, television shows, TV news accounts, and feature films. You have learned how to interpret these documents to increase your understanding of history.

Your challenge:

To create your own document based question, focused on the topic, or theme of your choice. Organize it in the same format as the DBQs you have grown accustomed to answering, and research and include your own primary sources that will help answer the question. Finally, you will write an exemplar DBQ essay using the materials you have collected.

Requirements:

- Include an "Historical Context" for your essay question. (a statement that introduces the topic) – see samples below
- Include at least five documents that you have researched that support your answer to the question.
- Include at least one song, television show, film, and new source in your collection of documents.
- Formulate questions that place each document in a framework for your question.
- Organize the information in a neat, professional manner.
- Create an exemplary essay using the question and documents you have included.

Question format:

There are many ways to create an historical context and ask a DBQ question. Some formats you may wish to consider are:

Method 1:

The 19____s was a time of great _____ for many Americans. Events such as the _____, _____, and _____ had a great impact on American society.

Using your knowledge of history, and the documents provided, pick two events that demonstrate that the 19____s was a time of great _____ and:

- Describe the event
- Analyze its impact on American Society

Method 2:

The 19____s was a time of great _____ for many Americans. People such as _____, _____, and _____ played a major role in the decade's _____.

Using your knowledge of history, and the documents provided, pick two people that demonstrate that the 19____s was a time of great _____ and:

- Describe person's actions and beliefs
- Analyze their impact on American Society

Method 3:

The 19____s was a time of great _____ for many Americans. The culture was changing, and people began to emphasize (become more concerned with) _____, _____, and _____ in their lives.

Using your knowledge of history, and the documents provided, pick two cultural changes that demonstrate that the 19____s was a time of great _____ and:

- Describe cultural change
- Explain its causes
- Analyze its impact/effects on American Society

Other ideas are welcome and should be cleared with the teacher before you commence your research.

Finished Product:

Your final product should include:

- Essay question sheet (historical context, question)
- Documents and scaffolding questions
- Exemplary essay

Student-Created DBQ Rubric

For a grade in the A – Range:

- Final product is neat, organized, and professional-looking
- Essay question page includes a well-worded, thoughtful, and unique historical context
- Essay question follows a theme and requires higher level thinking
- Documents provide information that aid in answering essay question
- Scaffolding questions are appropriate and well-written
- Exemplary essay demonstrates higher-level thinking including analysis
- Exemplary essay is error-free and demonstrates mastery of the information

For a grade in the B – Range:

- Final product is somewhat neat, organized, and professional-looking
- Essay question page includes an original historical context
- Essay question shows evidence of a theme and requires some higher level thinking
- Documents provide information that aid in answering essay question
- Scaffolding questions are appropriate
- Exemplary essay thoroughly answers the question
- Exemplary essay is free of major errors and demonstrates knowledge of the information

For a grade in the C – Range:

- Final product may be lacking in organization
- Essay question page includes an historical context that may lack a clear direction or line of thought
- Essay question follows the historical context but may be poorly-worded or unclear
- Documents are related to the essay question
- Scaffolding questions are appropriate
- Exemplary essay demonstrates satisfactorily answers the question using the documents
- Exemplary essay is may contain errors and/or faulty analysis

For a grade in the D – Range:

- Final product lacks organization
- Essay question page may be missing an historical context
- Essay question lacks a theme
- Documents do not support the theme or historical context
- Scaffolding questions are missing or unsatisfactory
- Exemplary essay shows a lack of understanding of the theme or question
- Exemplary essay contains substantial errors and faulty analysis

For a failing grade (F):

- Final product fails to meet any of the requirements (missing all or most of the following: historical context, theme, question, documents, scaffolding questions, exemplary essay)
- Final product is plagiarized
- Final product is not turned in

Document Analysis Graphic Organizers

Television

Films

Song

Articles

Primary Source Document Analysis Television Episode Interpretation Guide

Step 1: Identify the show –

- Title
- Producer:
- Director:
- Years run:

Step 2: Describe the time period in which the show aired:

- Major Events:
- Conflicts:
- Groups:

Step 3: List important characters /story lines in the episode:

-
-
-
-
-

Step 4: Analyze –

What is the symbolic meaning of the storyline?

What story does the show tell?

Step 5: Compare / Contrast –

Name one show it is similar to:

Describe the similarity:

Name one show it is different than:

Describe what makes them different:

Step 5: Evaluate –

What can this episode tell us about the time period in which it aired?

Why is this television show historically significant?

Primary Source Document Analysis Film Interpretation Guide

Step 1: Identify the film –

- Title
- Director:
- Producer:
- Year Released:

Step 2: Describe the time period in which the film was released:

- Major Events:
- Conflicts:
- Groups:

Step 3: List important characters/events in the film:

-
-
-
-
-

Step 4: Analyze –

What is the symbolic meaning of the characters/events?

What story does the film tell?

Step 5: Compare / Contrast –

Name one film it is similar to:

Describe the similarity:

Name one film it is different than:

Describe what makes them different:

Step 5: Evaluate –

What can this film tell us about the time period in which it was created and released?

Why is this film historically significant?

Primary Source Document Analysis Song Interpretation Guide

Step 1: Identify the song –

- Title
- Writer:
- Artist:
- Year:

Step 2: Describe the time period in which the song was written:

- Major Events:
- Conflicts:
- Groups:

Step 3: List important words/phrases in the song:

-
-
-
-
-

Step 4: Analyze –

What is the symbolic meaning of the words?

What story does the song tell?

Step 5: Compare / Contrast –

Name one song this song is similar to:

Describe the similarity:

Name one song this song is different than:

Describe what makes them different:

Step 5: Evaluate –

What can this song tell us about the time period in which it was written / performed?

Why is this song historically significant?

Primary Source Document Article Analysis

Step 1: Identify the source –

- Article Title
- Journalist/Author:
- Magazine/Newspaper:
- Date published:

Step 2: Describe the time period in which the article was written -

- Major Events:
- Conflicts:
- Groups:

Step 3: List important facts or claims made in the article -

-
-
-
-
-

Step 4: Analyze –

What story is the author telling?

What argument is being made?

Step 5: Compare / Contrast –

Who might agree with this argument?

Why?

Who might disagree with this argument?

Why?:

Step 5: Evaluate –

What can this article tell us about the time period in which it was written?

Using Popular Culture in the U.S. History Classroom: Resources for teachers

Websites:

<http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/>

Museum of Broadcast Communications –

- Academic website that includes biographical information on television programs
- Articles on the historical significance of the situation comedy

www.tv.com

- Database of television shows – search by program title
- Gives biographical information on each program
- Provides complete list of all episodes and includes description
- Extras include soundbytes and episode clips

<http://www.sitcomsonline.com/>

Sitcoms Online –

- Provides alphabetical lists and descriptions of TV sitcoms
- Provides links to other useful websites
- Includes theme songs and episode clips

www.filmsite.org/filmh.html

Film History –

- Web articles that provide a comprehensive history of the film and its creators
- Contains AFI's top 100 lists, and commentaries by Roger Ebert

www.TCM.com

Turner Classic Movies –

- Provides biographical information on over 150,000 films
- Contains a feature that lets you view clips from most of the films listed

http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/film_and_history/

Project Muse: Film & History: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Film and Television Studies

- The Journal's online format
- Informative articles on films' interpretations of various subjects in history
- Must have a subscribing library's password to access articles

library.thinkquest.org/29285/history/

Scene One: The History of Film –

- Provides a comprehensive list of noteworthy films by decade, including Oscar Winners
- Includes important events that changed the film industry by decade

www.Rogerebert.com

Roger Ebert's Great Movies –

- Database of all of Roger Ebert's movie reviews

<http://www.dailyscript.com/index.html>

The Daily Script –

- Database of movie and television scripts

Journals / Books / Other Scholarly Resources:

Barnouw, Erik. Tube of Plenty: The Evolution of American Television. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.

Benshoff, Harry M. *America on Film: Representing Race, Class, Gender and Sexuality at the Movies*.

Carr, Jay. *The A List: The National Society of Film Critics' 100 Essential Films*. Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2002.

Ebert, Roger. The Great Movies (New York: Broadway Books, 2002), 139.

Film History, Indiana University Press

- Covers topics related to the historical development of the motion picture.

Leibman, Nina C. Living Room Lectures: The Fifties Family in Film and Television. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1995.

Nickel, John. "Disabling African American Men: Liberalism and Race Message Films." *Cinema Journal* 44, no. 1 (2004): 25-48.

Rausch, Andrew J, and Joe Bob Briggs. *Turning Points in Film History*. 2004.

Roberts, Randy, and Steven Mintz. *Hollywood's America: United States History through its Films*.

Sklar, Robert. *Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies*. New York: Vintage Books, 1994.

Sullivan, Dennis, Fred Boehrer, and "Spike Lee's *Do the Right Thing*: Filmmaking in the American Grain." *Contemporary Justice Review* 6, no. 2 (2003): 143-167.

Weinstein, Paul B.. "Movies as the Gateway to History: The History and Film Project." *The History Teacher* 35, no. 1 (2001): 27-48.

Williams, Paul. "What a Bummer for the Gooks: Representations of white American masculinity and the Vietnamese in the Vietnam War film genre 1977-87." *European Journal of American Culture* 22, no. 3 (2003): 215-234.