



A timeline of family sitcoms (situation comedies)

A reflection of family, society and culture?

I love Lucy (1951-1957)

From Wikipedia: I Love Lucy was the most-watched show in the United States in four of its six seasons, and was the first to end its run at the top of the Nielsen ratings (an accomplishment later matched by The Andy Griffith Show and Seinfeld). I Love Lucy is still syndicated in dozens of languages across the world.

The show was the first to be shot on 35 mm film in front of a studio audience, won five Emmy Awards and received numerous nominations. In 2002, it ranked second on TV Guide's list of television's greatest shows, behind Seinfeld and ahead of The Honeymooners. In 2007 it was listed as one of Time magazine's "100 Best TV Shows of All-TIME."

Looking at the episode of *I Love Lucy*, make a list of what the show likes to portray as a "regular" family in the 20th century:

What does a "normal" family look like? Where do they live?

How should children behave? (Give me some examples)

What was the role of women?

What was the role of men?

Other observations:



Leave it to Beaver (1957-1968)

From Wikipedia: One of the first primetime sitcom series written from a child's point-of-view, the show was created by the writers Joe Connelly and Bob Mosher. These veterans of radio and early television found inspiration for the show's characters, plots, and dialogue in the lives, experiences, and conversations of their own children. Like several television dramas and sitcoms of the late 1950s and early 1960s (Lassie and My Three Sons, for example), Leave It to Beaver is a glimpse at middle-class, white American boyhood. In a typical episode Beaver got into some sort of trouble, then faced his parents for reprimand and correction. However, neither parent was omniscient; indeed, the series often showed the parents debating their approach to child rearing, and some episodes were built around parental gaffes.



Notes:

Looking at the episode of *Leave it to Beaver*, make a list of what the show likes to portray as a “regular” family in the 20th century:

What does a “normal” family look like? Where do they live?

How should children behave? (Give me some examples)

What was the role of women?

What was the role of men?

Other observations:



Brady Bunch (1969-1974)

From Wikipedia: The Brady Bunch is an American television sitcom starring Robert Reed, Florence Henderson, and Ann B. Davis, which revolves around a large blended family. The show originally aired from September 26, 1969, to March 8, 1974, on ABC and was subsequently syndicated internationally.

Notes:

Looking at the episode of *The Brady Bunch*, make a list of what the show likes to portray as a “regular” family in the 20th century:

What does a “normal” family look like? Where do they live?

How should children behave? (Give me some examples)

What was the role of women?

What was the role of men?

Other observations:

Cosby Show (1984-1992)

From Wikipedia: The *Cosby Show* is an American television situation comedy starring Bill Cosby, first airing on September 20, 1984 and running for eight seasons on the NBC television network, until April 30, 1992. The show focuses on the Huxtable family, an affluent African-American family living in Brooklyn, New York.

Notes:



Looking at the episode of *The Cosby Show*, make a list of what the show likes to portray as a “regular” family in the 20th century:

What does a “normal” family look like? Where do they live?

How should children behave? (Give me some examples)

What was the role of women?

What was the role of men?

Other observations (*What do we do with a show like this knowing what we do about its lead actor Bill Cosby?*)

The Simpsons (1989-present day)



From Wikipedia: The Simpsons has won dozens of awards since it debuted as a series, including 27 Primetime Emmy Awards, 27 Annie Awards and a Peabody Award. Time magazine's December 31, 1999 issue named it the 20th century's best television series, and on January 14, 2000 the Simpson family was awarded a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. The Simpsons is the longest-running American sitcom, the longest-running American animated program, and in 2009 it surpassed *Gunsmoke* as the longest running American primetime entertainment series. Homer's exclamatory catchphrase "D'oh!" has been adopted into the English lexicon, while The Simpsons has influenced many adult-oriented animated sitcoms.

Notes:

Looking at the episode of *The Simpsons*, make a list of what the show likes to portray as a "regular" family in the 20th & 21st centuries:

What does a "normal" family look like? Where do they live?

How should children behave? (Give me some examples)

What was the role of women?

What was the role of men?

Other observations:

Family Guy (1998-present day)

From Wikipedia: Family Guy has been nominated for 12 Primetime Emmy Awards and 11 Annie Awards, and has won three of each. It has garnered three Golden Reel Award nominations, winning once. In 2009, it was nominated for an Emmy for Outstanding Comedy Series, the first time an animated series was nominated for the award since The Flintstones in 1961. Family Guy has also received criticism, including unfavorable comparisons for its similarities to The Simpsons.



Notes:

Looking at the episode of *Family Guy*, make a list of what the show likes to portray as a “regular” family in the 21st century:

What does a “normal” family look like? Where do they live?

How should children behave? (Give me some examples)

What was the role of women?

What was the role of men?

Other observations:

Modern Family (2009-present day)



From Wikipedia: The half-hour series, which was created by Christopher Lloyd and Steven Levitan, is produced by ABC and largely presented in a mockumentary style. The story follows the families of Jay Pritchett (Ed O'Neill), his daughter Claire Dunphy (Julie Bowen), and his son Mitchell Pritchett (Jesse Tyler Ferguson) who live in a Los Angeles-area suburban community. Claire is a homemaker mom married to Phil Dunphy (Ty Burrell); they have three children. After splitting with his longtime wife, Jay has re-married with a much younger Colombian woman, Gloria Pritchett (Sofía Vergara), and is helping her raise her pre-teen son, Manny Delgado (Rico Rodriguez). Mitchell and his partner Cameron Tucker (Eric Stonestreet) have adopted a Vietnamese baby, Lily Pritchett-Tucker.

Notes:

Looking at the episode of Modern Family, make a list of what the show likes to portray as a “regular” family in the 21st century:

What does a “normal” family look like? Where do they live?

How should children behave? (Give me some examples)

What was the role of women?

What was the role of men?

Other observations:

Schitt's Creek (2015-2020)

From Wikipedia: The wealthy Rose family—video store magnate Johnny (Eugene Levy), his wife and former soap opera actress Moira (Catherine O'Hara), and their adult children David and Alexis (Daniel Levy and Annie Murphy)—lose their fortune after being defrauded by their business manager. They are forced to rebuild their lives with their sole remaining asset: a small town named Schitt's Creek, which they had bought for their son as a joke birthday gift back in 1991.

The Roses relocate to Schitt's Creek, moving into two adjacent rooms in a run-down motel. As the family adjusts to their new lives, their well-to-do attitudes come into conflict with the more provincial residents of Schitt's Creek, including mayor Roland Schitt (Chris Elliott), his wife Jocelyn (Jenn Robertson), and the motel's manager, Stevie (Emily Hampshire).

Notes:

Looking at the episode of Schitt's Creek, make a list of what the show likes to portray families in the 21st century:

What does a "normal" family look like? Where do they live?

How should children behave? (Give me some examples)

What was the role of women?

What was the role of men?

Are the above questions even relevant anymore? Are there other questions that we should be adding?



Watching Screens in the United States:

1947 – 44,000 TVs **1949** – 3.6 million TVs **1951** – 15 million TVs
1959 – 67 million TVs **2006** – 285 million TVs **Early 2000s** – Streaming video via the Internet becomes possible, changing the nature of when/where media is watched
2007 – Netflix offers begins streaming movies for a flat fee **2007** – iPhone unveiled

Curriculum Expectations Addressed by this assignment:

- D1. Social, Economic, and Political Context:** describe some key social, economic, and political trends, events, and developments in Canada between 1945 and 1982, and explain how they affected the lives of people in Canada (**FOCUS ON:** *Continuity and Change*)
- D2. Communities, Conflict, and Cooperation:** describe some key developments that affected interactions between different communities in Canada, and between Canada and the international community, from 1945 to 1982, and assess their significance (**FOCUS ON:** *Historical Significance; Historical Perspective*)
- D3. Identity, Citizenship, Heritage:** describe how some individuals, organizations, and social and political developments and/or events contributed to the development of identity, citizenship, and/or heritage in Canada between 1945 and 1982 (**FOCUS ON:** *Historical Significance; Cause and Consequence*)

- E1. Social, Economic, and Political Context:** describe some key social, economic, and political events, trends, and developments in Canada from 1982 to the present, and assess their impact on the lives of different people in Canada (**FOCUS ON:** *Historical Significance; Historical Perspective*)
- E2. Communities, Conflict, and Cooperation:** describe some significant issues and/or developments that have affected interactions between different communities in Canada, and between Canada and the United States, from 1982 to the present, and explain some changes that have resulted from these issues/developments (**FOCUS ON:** *Continuity and Change*)
- E3. Identity, Citizenship, Heritage:** describe how some individuals, groups, and events, both national and international, have contributed to the development of identity, citizenship, and/or heritage in Canada from 1982 to the present (**FOCUS ON:** *Historical Significance; Cause and Consequence*)

Possible Big Questions (Applying the Historical Thinking Concepts):

How has the portrayal of “the family” changed over time? How has each family members’ role changed?
What does this tell us about how the perception of a North American family has changed since the Second World War?
What is the significance of sitcoms portraying “family life” to millions of viewers across Canada?