

Reader's Guide

Television in American Society: Almanac presents a comprehensive overview of the development of television technology, the growth of the broadcast and cable industries, the evolution of television programming, and the impact of television on American society and culture. The volume's eleven chapters cover all aspects of television in the United States, from the invention of the technology in the 1920s to programming trends in the 2000s. The main emphasis of the volume concerns the many ways in which television has both reflected and influenced American life throughout its history.

Television in American Society: Almanac begins by describing the early efforts of various scientists, engineers, and inventors to transmit visual images across a distance. It then details the formation and growth of the American broadcasting industry. The volume continues by covering the development of television programming, with separate chapters devoted to prime-time series, children's and daytime shows, sports broadcasting, and news and political coverage. It then provides an assessment of television's impact on various aspects of American society, including its treatment of minorities, its influence on the political process, and its role in advertising. The volume concludes by offering a look at possible future trends in television.

Features

Television in American Society: Almanac includes informative sidebars, some containing brief biographies of influential people in the world of television, and others providing descriptions of technical features or interesting facts about the television industry. Approximately seventy black-and-white

photographs enliven the work. *Television in American Society: Almanac* also includes a timeline of important events, a section defining important words to know, and a list of research and activity ideas with suggestions for study questions, group projects, and oral and dramatic presentations. *Television in American Society: Almanac* concludes with a bibliography of sources for further reading and a subject index.

Television in American Society Reference Library

Television in American Society: Almanac is only one component of a three-volume Television in American Society Reference Library. The other two titles in this multivolume set are:

- *Television in American Society: Biographies* presents profiles of twenty-six men and women who influenced the development of television in a significant way. The volume covers such key figures as inventors Philo T. Farnsworth and Vladimir Zworykin; industry leaders David Sarnoff and William S. Paley; cable TV pioneers Ted Turner and Robert L. Johnson; program producers Joan Ganz Cooney and Norman Lear; TV news journalists Walter Cronkite and Barbara Walters; and television personalities Lucille Ball, Bill Cosby, and Oprah Winfrey.
- *Television in American Society: Primary Sources* presents fifteen full or excerpted documents relating to the development and impact of television. These documents range from notable speeches that mark important points in TV history to critical analyses of television's influence on American culture. The documents are arranged chronologically, beginning with longtime RCA chairman David Sarnoff's 1936 remarks to the press at his company's first demonstration of television technology, and ending with former vice president Al Gore's 2005 speech about the effects of television on democracy.
- A cumulative index of all three titles in Television in American Society Reference Library is also available.

Comments and Suggestions

We welcome your comments on *Television in American Society: Almanac* and suggestions for other topics in history to consider. Please write: Editors, *Television in American Society: Almanac*, U*X*L, 27500 Drake Road, Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535; call toll-free 800-877-4253; fax to 248-699-8097; or send e-mail via <http://www.gale.com>.

Words to Know

A

affiliate: A local television station that is connected or grouped together with a major network. Local affiliate stations are required to carry the network's programs according to a regular schedule.

airwaves: Naturally occurring waves of electromagnetic energy that travel through the air and can be used to carry information, such as television signals. In the United States, the airwaves belong to the American people, and the FCC grants individuals and companies the right to use the public airwaves by issuing broadcast licenses.

American Broadcasting Company (ABC): One of the major U.S. broadcast television networks, formed in 1943.

analog: A naturally occurring form of electromagnetic energy that is composed of waves and can be used to carry information, such as television signals.

anchor: The main host or presenter on a television news program.

animated: A type of television program that features cartoon characters rather than live actors.

B

bandwidth: A measurement of the amount of space on the airwaves needed to carry a television signal, based on the frequency and wavelength characteristics of that signal.

Big Three: The major networks (ABC, CBS, and NBC) that controlled television broadcasting in the United States from the 1940s until the 1980s.

broadcast: The act of sending communication signals, such as radio or television programs, over a large area to be received by many people. The term is also used to distinguish television networks that deliver their signals over the airwaves from those that deliver their signals by cable or satellite.

broadcast license: A permit granted by the FCC that gives an individual or company the right to operate a radio or television station that sends communications signals over the public airwaves.



cable television: A type of service that delivers television signals to customers through cables, or long wires buried underground or strung along electrical poles, rather than through the airwaves.

cathode ray tube: The part of a television set that makes it possible to see an image on the screen. Invented in 1897, it works by shooting a beam of electrons (tiny, negatively charged particles) toward the inside of the TV screen, which is coated with a substance that glows when struck by the beam of radiation. Also known as a picture tube.

coaxial cable: A type of line or wire used to transmit electronic communication signals, consisting of a copper wire surrounded by insulation, with an aluminum coating.

Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS): One of the major U.S. broadcast television networks, formed in 1927 as a radio network.

commercial television broadcasting: A type of service, approved by the FCC in 1941, in which television networks sell commercial time to advertisers. The networks use advertising money to create and distribute programs according to a regular schedule. Before 1941, television broadcasting was experimental, and it was paid for by the television networks and TV set manufacturers.

Communications Act of 1934: The first major U.S. law that covered television. It created the Federal Communications Commission to oversee and regulate all forms of electronic communication, including radio, television, telephone, and telegraph.

Research and Activity Ideas

The following research and activity ideas are intended to offer suggestions for complementing social studies and history curricula; to trigger additional ideas for enhancing learning; and to provide cross-disciplinary projects for library and classroom use.

- With the help of your family, track the television viewing time in your household for one week. Note how many hours each television set is turned on, and how many commercials appear during that time. Multiply your results by 52 weeks to estimate your family's TV viewing time for one year. Discuss and compare your results with the class.
- Imagine that television producer Mark Burnett, creator of the reality TV series *Survivor* and *The Apprentice*, offers to pay your family not to watch television for one year. Would you agree? How much money would he have to pay you? If Burnett filmed your family's interactions before and during the television-free year, how do you think they would change? What kinds of things would you do to fill the time you normally would have spent watching television? What would you miss the most and least about television? Would you be willing to give up television permanently?
- As a class, make a list of some of the ways that television has influenced or changed American society. Consider such areas as politics, family life, gender roles, perceptions of racial and ethnic minorities, views of other nations and cultures, and attitudes about violence. Following the discussion, ask students to vote about whether the overall impact of television has been positive or negative.