

Reader's Guide

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.

Included are excerpts from legendary broadcast journalist Edward R. Murrow's famous 1958 speech to the Radio and Television News Directors Association, in which he criticizes network executives for emphasizing entertainment rather than information in TV news; former FCC chairman Newton N. Minow's historic 1961 speech to the National Association of Broadcasters, in which he describes television programming as a "vast wasteland"; President Lyndon B. Johnson's remarks upon signing the Public Broadcasting Act of 1967, which led to the creation of PBS; the 1999 "Appeal to Hollywood," which complains about the level of violence and inappropriate content in television programs; and Ted Turner's 2004 article "My Beef with Big Media," which outlines the potential drawbacks of the consolidation that took place in American broadcasting during the 1990s and 2000s.

Features

Each document included in *Television in American Society: Primary Sources* features the following additional text:

- **Introductory material** places the document and its author in historical context.
- **Things to remember while reading** offers readers important background information and directs them to central ideas in the text.
- **Excerpt/full document** presents the document in its original spelling and format.
- **What happened next . . .** discusses the impact of the document and provides an account of subsequent historical events.
- **Did you know . . .** provides interesting facts about the document and its author.
- **Consider the following . . .** offers suggestions for study questions, group projects, and oral presentations.
- **For More Information** provides resources for further study of the document and its author, as well as sources used by the author in writing the material.

Television in American Society: Primary Sources includes informative sidebars highlighting interesting, related information. Approximately thirty black-and-white photographs illustrate the text. Each chapter has a glossary that runs alongside the reprinted document to identify unfamiliar terms and ideas contained within the material. *Television in American Society: Primary Sources* also includes a timeline of important events and a section defining important words to know. The volume concludes with a bibliography of sources for further reading, and a subject index.

Television in American Society Reference Library

Television in American Society: Primary Sources 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: 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: 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.
- 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: Primary Sources* and suggestions for other topics in history to consider. Please write: Editors, *Television in American Society: Primary Sources*, 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.