

# Going Ape and Having a Cow: Television

For a brief history of WCIA, go to:

<http://www.dougquick.com/wciachampaign2.html>

\*November 14, 1953 was WCIA's Inaugural Day; prime time hours included *The Jackie Gleason Show*, *Two for the Money*, and *Amos & Andy*. For the purpose of this lesson, students will watch episodes of *Amos 'n Andy* and *The Honeymooners*. The character of Ralph Kramden originated on the *Jackie Gleason Show* as a recurring sketch comedy character. The *Jackie Gleason Show* is no longer readily available on VHS or DVD, so students will watch an episode of *The Honeymooners* in its stead.

## Activity #1

4. Hand out Television Analysis Worksheet to students and go over it together in class, focusing particularly on the gender, realism, and race/class questions of the Post-viewing section as they may require an explanation.
5. Students could watch either *The Adoption* or *Leroy's Suits* episode of *Amos 'n Andy*, as those are closest to the episode that may have been aired on November 14, 1953, completing the analysis worksheet as they view.
6. Refer to the Amos 'n Andy Episode Guide if another episode from the DVD is chosen.

## Activity #2

1. Students repeat the above activity, only watching one of the episodes of *The Honeymooners* and completing a Television Analysis Worksheet.
2. Refer to The Honeymooners Episode Guide to choose viewing episode.

## Activity #3

1. Students can watch a modern television sit-com (either as a class or outside of class on own) to compare/contrast to one of the shows from the 1950s.
2. If students choose to compare/contrast *Amos 'n Andy*, they should choose a modern sit-com that focuses on minority main characters, i.e. *The Hughleys*, *My Wife & Kids*, *George Lopez*, etc...
3. If students choose to compare/contrast *The Honeymooners*, they should choose a modern sit-com that focuses on a married couple (or two) such as *Yes, Dear*, *King of Queens*, *Everybody Loves Raymond*, etc...
4. Some of these may be available in DVD from the local library or a local video rental store (Rentertainment, Blockbuster, etc...).
5. Some households have TiVo or DVR devices and perhaps those households could be enlisted to record show episodes for the class/students

to use in their compare/contrast essay.

6. Students will write a compare/contrast essay of their two shows, one modern and one from the 1950s viewed in class, the length and focus of which are to be determined by the teacher.

### **Alternative Writing Assignment**

(Used with permission from *Ten Television Analysis Writing Projects* by Traci Gardner at <http://www.tengrrl.com/tens/022.shtml>)

Imagine that the program you've watched from the 1950s is all that has survived to tell future generations about America in the 1950s. Imagine that a video recording of this program has been discovered 500 years from now. Miraculously, the discoverers have found a way to watch the program. What would they think of us and our world in the 1950s? Take on the role of one of the discoverers, and write a report to your home office explaining what you've learned about your ancestors based on the program. Be sure that your report draws clear connections between the details of the program and the conclusions about your ancestors.