

US History
Social & Economic History of the 1950s

Learning Target:

I can examine how the development of the television and the advertising industry affected 1950s society and economy.

6. Television & Advertising

Statistics –

1927 – TV workable
1946 – 7,000 TV's produced
1950 – 4,000,000 TV's produced
1957 – 40,000,000 TV's produced

-By 1956 daily average TV viewing time reached 5 hours per day

Costs of Televisions Rapidly Decrease –

-1946 – RCA Victor
-10 inch, black and white
-\$325

-1950 – Sears Silverstone
-10 inch, black and white
-\$150

-A rapid decrease in price of very similar types of televisions in a four-year span

Types of Programming –

1. Situation Comedies:
Example – I Love Lucy
2. Dramatic Series
Example – Dragnet
3. Variety Shows
Example – Ed Sullivan Show
4. News Programming
Example – Edward R. Murrow

Common Theme of Programming –

-The Ideal Family –
-Family's portrayed as a working father, a housewife, and wonderful children
-Family's lived the so-called American Dream (Father Knows Best etc . . .)

Advertising and Television –

- The foundation of the television industry was advertising
- No money would be made without it

1st TV commercial (1941) –
 Bulova Watch Company
 1 minute long
 \$9.00

- By 1950 TV ads totaled \$170 million
- By 1960 TV ads totaled \$3.6 billion

- American advertisers discovered that TV was like a personal salesman in every home

Industries hit by TV –

1. Movies -

1946 – Americans attended movies at the rate of 90 million per week
1950 – Dropped to 60 million
1960 – Dropped to 40 million

- One obvious casualty of the stay at home suburban culture was movies
- You could watch a movie on TV with no traffic or need for a babysitter
- People were fascinated with this new technology

2. Radio -

- The biggest casualty due to the growth of TV was radio
- By 1950 TV had broke radio's grip on America
- Americans no longer thought of the radio as their main source for news

Conclusions –

- The rise of TV as an entertainment center for the American public was the dominant media trend of the 1950s
- The growth of TV also stimulated the American economy through advertising