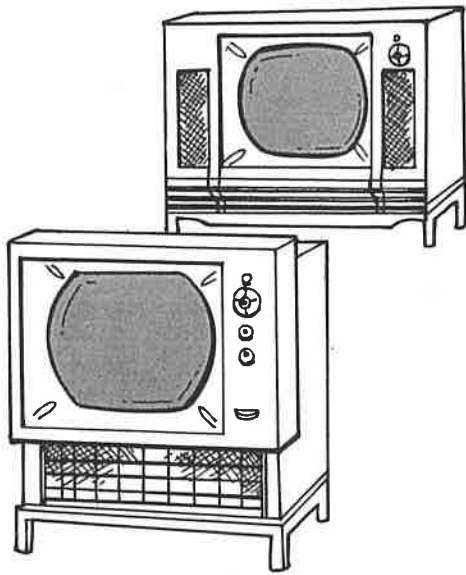


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# Television Takes Over

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The first major event televised in the 1960s was the presidential debate between John F. Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon. More than 115 million people saw at least one of these face-to-face confrontations that were carried on all three networks. It was the first time presidential candidates debated on television. Kennedy looked young and fit. A bad make-up job made Nixon look pale and old. Many viewers thought the debates contributed to Kennedy's victory in the 1960 presidential election.

Popular shows of the time were *The Beverly Hillbillies*, *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.*, *Get Smart*, *Bonanza*, and *Dr. Kildaire*. Red Skelton and Andy Griffith were popular television personalities. Two of the most entertaining and popular shows were *The Lucy Show* and *The Dick Van Dyke Show*. Do you remember watching *Petticoat Junction*, *Bewitched*, or *Gomer Pyle U.S.M.C.*? They were also popular during the 1960s.

Television also presented the turmoil of the times. Viewers watched the tragic assassination of President Kennedy on November 22, 1963. Only two days later they saw one of the most terrible scenes in television history when Jack Ruby shot and killed Lee Harvey Oswald as he was escorted from a jail in Dallas, Texas. This real-life drama continued with the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in Memphis and the murder of Senator Robert F. Kennedy in Los Angeles. Americans became acutely aware of the news as it happened.

From the middle of the sixties to the end of the conflict, television showed battle scenes from the Vietnam War. Viewers saw Vietnamese villages torched and burned; naked children burned with napalm; young American soldiers and Marines bandaged, wounded, and dying as they fought both the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces. Many Americans stated that Vietnam was the first war that was fought on television. These daily "upclose and personal" encounters with the war action affected many Americans' support of the war effort.

The final aspect of the impact of television in the 1960s was coverage of America's space program. The picture of Lt. Colonel Edward H. White (of the *Gemini 4* manned flight) walking in space in June of 1965 was spectacular. Even that feat paled when America watched astronaut Edwin Aldrin Jr. walk on the surface of the moon in 1969. In the foreground of that picture were the footprints of Aldrin and astronaut Neil Armstrong.

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## Discussion Questions

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1. What were your favorite television programs of the 1960s? Who was your favorite television personality?
2. Which of the historical events of the decade did you see on television? What were you doing when these events took place? How old were you?
3. In the 1960s singers Frank Sinatra and Barbra Streisand were two stars who entertained us with musical specials. Why are there so few musical programs on television today?
4. In the 1960s *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour* and Rowan and Martin's *Laugh-In* were considered to be controversial. Did you watch these shows? Why were they considered to be controversial? Do you know what famous actress got her start on *Laugh-In*? (Goldie Hawn)
5. Besides watching television, what were some other fun activities that were popular? What did families do during the 1960s?