Date:



What makes a family?
Before reading, work with a partner.
Which of these families do you think you could see in an American sitcom?
nuclear family – single-parent family – working-class family – wealthy family – blended family – gay family – Black family

Now predict:

1950s: _____

1970s: _____

After 1970s: _____

Title : "The Evolution of Family Sitcoms"
Source: peabodyawards.com

There's something eternal about the way family, comedy, and television go together (...) The History of sictom is the history of America. \

The modern memory of early sitcoms begins with *I Love Lucy*, which began in 1951 and was focused on a married, childfree couple and their friends before stars Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz became parents in real life, forcing the birth of their onscreen son, Little Ricky. (...)

Picture-perfect nuclear families took over in the mid-1950s with *Father Knows Best*, *Leave It to Beaver*, and *The Donna Reed Show*. (...)

But the biggest shift came in the '70s with *All in the Family*, which brought us a working-class white family whose love language was loud, uncomfortable political squabbles (1). Producer Norman Lear subsequently created hits about Black families, *Good Times* and *The Jeffersons*.

In the '80s, *The Cosby Show* presented an idealized wealthy Black family to America and set the gold standard for family sitcoms for years to come.

In more recent years, as television has gotten more inventive, so have family comedies. *Modern Family* demonstrated that stepfamilies and gay families had become the norm. *Black-ish* gave us a Black family sitcom that tackled thorny (2) modern issues.

1. disagreements **2.** difficult

1 **Read** the text and **highlight** the names of sitcoms and the decades associated with them.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

2 **Pick out** the sitcom titles and the corresponding dates and family descriptions.

Sitcom title(s)	Dates	Words used to describe the American families
	1950s	
	1970s	
	1980s	
	Recent Years	

3 Read the statements. **Tick** true or false and **quote t**he words in the text that prove your answer.

1. *I Love Lucy* originally focused on a couple with children.
   ☐ true ☐ false

   .....

2. 1950s sitcoms often presented “picture-perfect” families.
   ☐ true ☐ false

   .....

3. *All in the Family* introduced political arguments into family comedy.
   ☐ true ☐ false

   .....

4. *The Cosby Show* presented a working-class Black family.
   ☐ true ☐ false

   .....

5. Modern sitcoms represent a wider variety of families.
   ☐ true ☐ false

   .....

LIVEWORKSHEETS

The author writes:

4 “The history of the sitcom is the history of America.”
What does this mean?
☐ Sitcoms are an important part of American history.
☐ Changes in sitcom families reflect changes in American society.
☐ Americans have always watched sitcoms.

Explain your choice:

.....
.....

5 GRAMMAR

Look at these sentences from the article:

A. I Love Lucy began in 1951.

B. Television has gotten more inventive.

C. Modern Family demonstrated that stepfamilies and gay families had become the norm.

D. Black-ish gave us a Black family sitcom that tackled modern issues.

E. The variations that have come along tell the story of what is changing in society.

1. Which sentences describe a finished event at a specific moment in the past?

→ _____

2. Which sentences describe a change/development connected to the present?

→ _____

3. Complete the rule:

PRETERIT → We use it for _____

PRESENT PERFECT → We use it for _____

3. Present perfect or preterit? Choose the correct form.

I Love Lucy (began / has begun) in 1951.

Family sitcoms (changed / have changed) considerably over the years.

All in the Family (introduced / has introduced) political arguments into family comedy in the 1970s.

Television (became / has become) more inventive in recent years.

Modern Family (demonstrated / has demonstrated) that different family structures could become mainstream.

American families (evolved / have evolved) considerably since the 1950s.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

EXIT ticket Name

How have American family sitcoms evolved from the 1950s to today?

Use at least three examples from the article.

HELP

In the 1950s, sitcoms generally showed…

In 1970, / In the 1970s, …

Since then, family sitcoms have…

Over the years, they have…

Today, sitcoms have become…

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