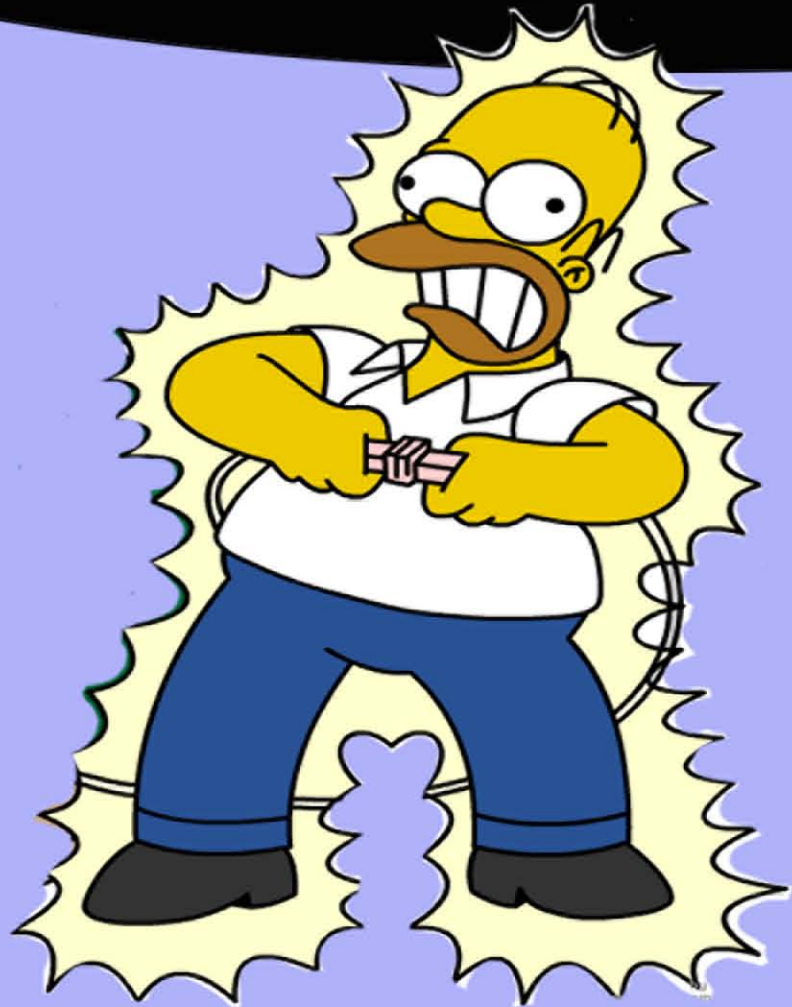


Sit-Com Dads: *Immature and Irresponsible?*



In the early days of television, TV dads seemed flawless. Now some are concerned that sit-com dads are baffoons.

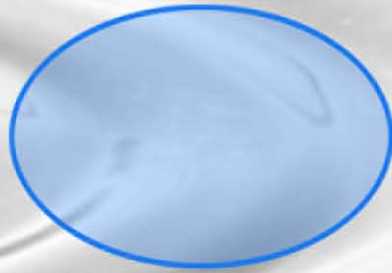
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TV DAD WORD SPLASH

Part 1 - On the lines provided, list as many names of fictional TV dads as you can. (make your own lines if you need to).

A collection of blue lines of various orientations and lengths scattered across the page, intended for writing the names of fictional TV dads.

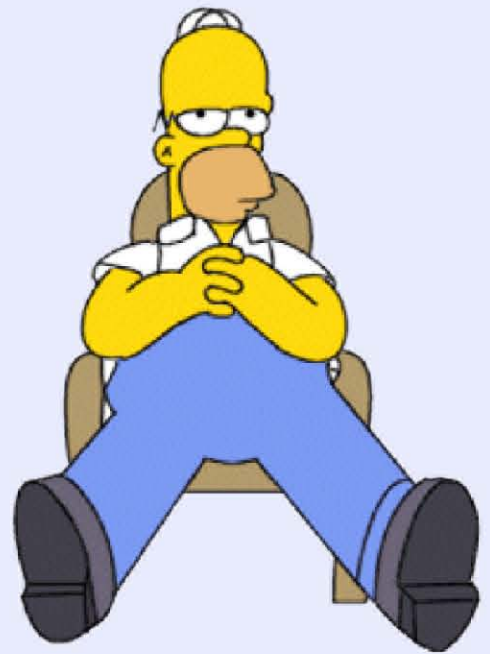
Part 2 - In the circle, write down the name of one of the dads on your list. In the space around the dad's name list his characteristics with examples from the show.



TV Dads

Popular culture often reflects cultural changes in the real world. But how accurate are the images in our popular culture? Are the portrayals we see in our television programs, magazines and movies representations of reality?

Gender roles for women and men have undergone significant changes since the introduction of TV. In the early days, the TV dad seemed flawless. He was intelligent, dependable and generally well respected in both the family and community. Times have changed on TV, and the "all-star fathers" --as represented by the dads on *Father Knows Best* and *Leave It to Beaver* has been replaced with goofy, irresponsible and immature fathers of *The Simpsons*, *Everybody Loves Raymond* and *According to Jim*.



Just as the characteristics and roles of dads have changed, the role of moms has changed significantly. While men were the breadwinners who did not participate equally in childcare tasks, early programs showed women primarily as wives and mothers who did not work outside the home. Today's television programs present women in a greater spectrum of TV roles, often balancing the conflicting demands of career and family ambitions. As the presence of moms has increased in the workforce, dads have become more domestic.



Almost every Canadian household has a TV (98 per cent according to Statistics Canada)¹



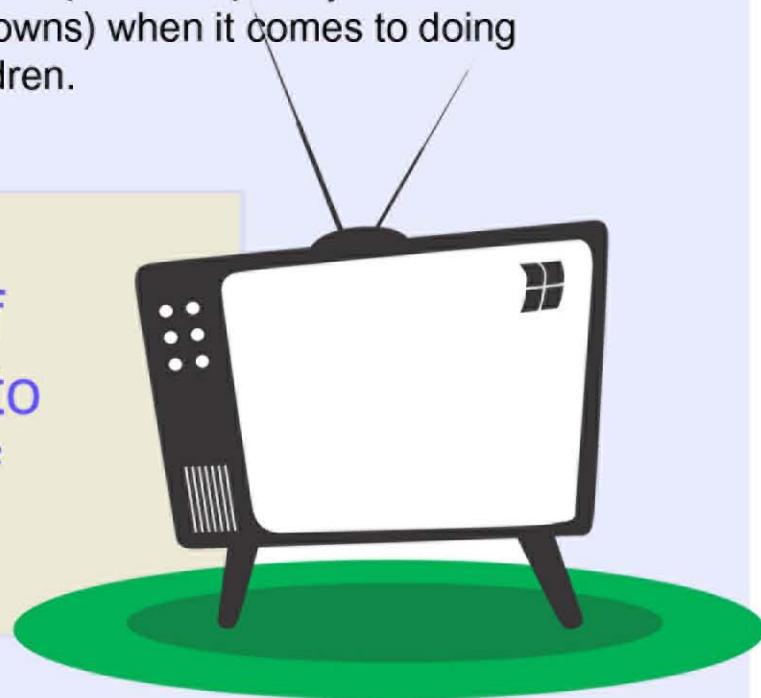
¹ Canadian Heritage, Cultural Labour Force Growing, New Publication Reports, December 12, 1995 www.pch.gc.ca/newsroom/index_e.cfm?fuseaction=displayDocument&DocIDCd=5NR167

TV Ad Dads

While most people would agree that the presence of father figures in domestic situations on TV is a good thing, many people are concerned about how fathers are portrayed. Interest groups for fatherhood rights often complain that many TV ads portray fathers as buffoons who get no respect in the home and cannot perform even the most minor of childcare tasks. Due to the time constraints of the format--advertisers have only 30 seconds of airtime to tell their story--TV ads typically rely on common stereotypes as a kind of "visual shorthand" to give audiences a quick understanding. Thus many ads rely on the easy laughs that a bumbling dad generates. Advertisers have created father figures that often range from slightly inept to completely useless clowns (albeit lighthearted and well-intentioned clowns) when it comes to doing household chores and parenting their children.

Forty eight per cent of students in Grades 3 to 10 have their own TV.²

² Canadian Teachers' Federation, Kids' Take on Media, 2003
www.ctf-fce.ca/bilingual/PUBS/ctfreport/kidsenglish.pdf



In the fall of 2004, fatherhood interest groups were vocal in their criticism of an ad called "Homework," by Verizon. The ad shows a father ineffectively trying to help his young daughter with her homework. Watch the commercial and answer the following questions.

- How would you describe the father in this ad? What characteristics does he display?
- How does this portrayal compare with those of other characters in the ad?
- How do the father's characteristics compare with those of the fathers you know in everyday life?
- Why do you think fatherhood advocacy groups expressed their concern about the ad?

Watch the commercial at http://fathersandhusbands.org/images/verizon_dsl_homework.wmv

Sitcom Dads



Often, sitcom dads such as Homer Simpson and Raymond Barone are portrayed as selfish and mindless. Although we believe that they love their children, storylines often portray their offspring as intrusions to other, more important pursuits such as drinking beer, watching TV or playing golf. These dads invest considerable time in thinking up schemes to avoid their family, and they appear overwhelmingly uninterested in everyone else's lives. Certainly these TV programs are not part of a grand conspiracy to attack dads, but there are enough existing examples to make many people concerned. While sitcoms have changed with the times, it is important to understand and think critically about how these programs are constructed to create humorous scenarios for entertainment value. The situations and characters in sitcoms are not true representations of reality.

QUESTIONS



- What are some common characteristics associated with sitcom dads?
- Are these characteristics consistent with how dads are portrayed in other genres?
- Do you think most students your age believe that these characteristics are accurate? How about students who are younger?
- Why do you think these portrayals exist?
- How do sitcom dads compare with dads in other types of media, such as music and movies?
- How different are the TV ad dads from those who appear in TV sitcoms?
- Do ads showcasing the bumbling father reinforce stereotypes (whether they are overt or subconscious) that it is acceptable to leave the bulk of parenting to mom?
- Do they also reinforce the notion that a nurturing and domesticated male is un-masculine?

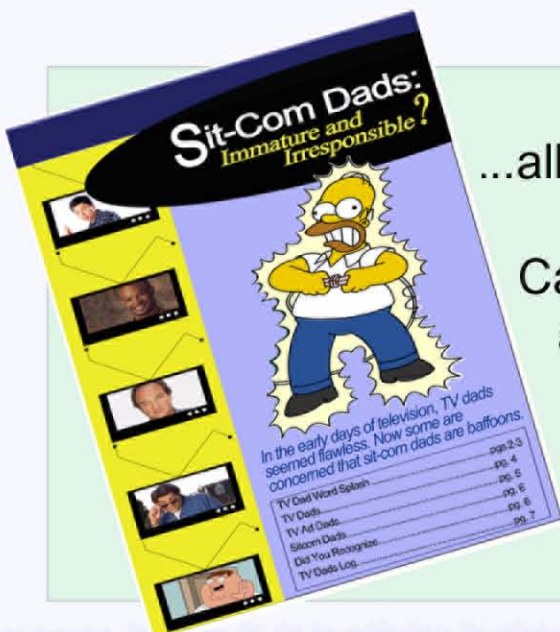
Did You Recognize...

...all the sitcom dads on the cover?

Can you name all the characters, the TV shows and the actors who are represented on the cover?

Try it.

Answers at the bottom of the last page.



TV DADS LOG

Enter examples of TV dad portrayals in the columns provided. Include such information as the date/time you saw the item, the TV network, the name of the program or a description of the advertisement, details of the portrayal and your reasons for judging it to be either a positive or a negative one.

+ Positive Examples	- Negative Examples

Centre - Homer Simpson, The Simpsons (v. Dan Castellane) Top Left - Raymond Barone, Everybody Loves Raymond, (Ray Romano)
 Second Left - Micheal Kyle, My Wife and Kids (Damon Wayans) Third Left - Jim, According to Jim (James Belushi)
 Fourth Left - George Lopez, The George Lopez Show (George Lopez) Bottom Left - Peter Griffin, Family Guy (v. Seth MacFarlane)