



Subject Support

History

Case study: *The impact of RTÉ, 1962-1972*

Developing the ability to think critically by exploring
causation with students

Spring, 2017

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The impact of RTÉ, 1962-1972: developing the ability to think critically by exploring causation with students

The Leaving Certificate History syllabus notes (p.2) that, “The student of history will learn about the centrality of change to all human experience ...”. In the 1960s, one significant instrument in bringing about change was the new television service. The case study, *The impact of RTÉ, 1962-1972*, offers students the opportunity to see how developments in communications media can trigger significant social and cultural change. In exploring issues of causation with students, we have a great opportunity to develop their ability to think critically, which is one of the stated objectives of the syllabus, and an increasingly cherished aim of senior cycle education.

At previous history in-service sessions, it has been argued that some of the best ways in which students’ critical thinking can be generated include:

- the use of the enquiry-focused approach
- the use of ‘critical skills’ exercises that involve group discussion and judgement-forming

Both approaches are drawn on in the following exploration of the case study.

The enquiry-focused approach

The enquiry-focused approach involves organising a set of lessons around an enquiry question on which the teaching and learning activities are focused. It aims to give a clear focus to a series of lessons, to clarify for all concerned what the learning purposes are and to ensure that the sequence of lessons is leading to improved understanding on the part of the students.

In her book, *The Twentieth Century World* (The Historical Association, 1997), Christine Counsell outlines the rationale behind the approach. The following is an edited extract:

Choosing a sequence of interesting historical enquiries gives a clear focus to any scheme of work. This approach has a number of advantages:

- (i) It prevents a superficial run through the content and leads pupils into deeper levels of historical understanding.
 - (ii) It allows students to engage in real historical debate. Historians usually begin with a question.
 - (iii) It motivates students by giving a clear focus to their work. Identifying key questions is a powerful way of ‘sharing clarity with learners’. Teachers are thus reinforcing that the whole point of a sequence of lessons or activities is to build towards some attempt at answering the question. Some teachers who use this approach will refer to such a question in every single lesson. Pupils are constantly reminded of what they are trying to do and why.
 - (iv) Key questions can shape and limit an otherwise sprawling content.
 - (v) It encourages pupils to produce more substantial and significant outcomes at the end of a section of work.
- (pp.30-31)

Linking your work on the case study to the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy

The following quote comes from *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life: The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People* (Department of Education and Skills, 2011, p.8)

Traditionally we have thought about **literacy** as the skills of reading and writing; but today our understanding of literacy encompasses much more than that. **Literacy includes the capacity to read, understand and critically appreciate various forms of communication including spoken language, printed text, broadcast media, and digital media.** Throughout this document, when we refer to “literacy” we mean this broader understanding of the skill, including speaking and listening, as well as communication using not only traditional writing and print but also digital media.

The student activities set down in this resource are designed to improve students’ “capacity to read, understand and critically appreciate various forms of communication including spoken language, printed text, broadcast media, and digital media.”

As the literacy strategy makes clear, a key element in developing literacy is promoting students’ listening, talking, reading and writing skills, as well as their ability to critically assess visual images and other broadcast material. Some of the ways in which material from this booklet can be used to achieve these objectives are as follows:

- The worksheet on the film clip encourages students to watch and listen carefully, and it includes questions designed to develop their ability to think critically.
- The questions/points for discussion that follow the sources are intended to form the basis for purposeful discussion among students and educative interaction between teacher and students. As well as promoting literacy, the teaching and learning conversation which this type of interaction underlies is a key component of all strategies for promoting assessment for learning in the classroom.
- The enquiry approach exemplified in this resource is designed to keep the learning outcomes constantly in the forefront of students’ minds. This is important in all strategies to improve literacy and is a key component of strategies for assessment for learning.
- The critical skills exercise is a type of card sorting exercise which helps to develop students listening skills and oral skills, as well as their ability to think critically.
- The importance of consolidating learning through carefully-designed written tasks is fundamental to student learning. The enquiry approach exemplified here concludes with an activity for students: “Your conclusions on the enquiry”. Also, some of the “Questions and points for discussion” set down for each step of the enquiry can be used as the basis for written tasks as deemed appropriate by the teacher.

The elements of *Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life* relating to numeracy identify the need to enable young people “to think and communicate quantitatively, to make sense of data, to have a spatial awareness, to understand patterns and sequences, and to recognise situations where mathematical reasoning can be applied to solve problems.” Teachers may wish to look out for opportunities to develop these abilities in students in the course of work on the case study. (e.g. in relation to data on 1965 election in Secondary Source 5, page30.)

The impact of RTÉ, 1962-1972: an overview of the case study

While some people in the eastern part of the country had been picking up the BBC and ITV signals using aerials attached to their chimneys from the 1950s, the Republic of Ireland's first television service began on New Year's Eve, 1961, and was initially known as Telefís Éireann. In 1966, Radio Éireann (which had begun life in 1926 as 2RN) and Telefís Éireann were given a new corporate identity under the joint name Radio Telefís Éireann (RTÉ). The case study focuses on the new television service during its first decade, as new forms of entertainment became popular and established forms of public discourse were challenged and transformed by the dynamics and practices of the new medium.

Some foreshadowing of the future impact of RTÉ may be seen in the words of President Éamon de Valera, the first voice to be heard on the new television service. In his opening remarks he said: "I must admit that sometimes when I think of television and radio and their immense power I feel somewhat afraid ... Never before was there in the hands of men an instrument so powerful to influence the thoughts and actions of the multitude." More open discussion of sexual matters and more vigorous questioning of political leaders were features of television programmes, in the 1960s and later, that discommoded many political and religious leaders.

Conceived as a light entertainment show, *The Late Late Show* became popular because it combined interviews with well-known popular performers - from film stars to pop musicians to circus clowns - with panel discussions on controversial subjects and a readiness to tackle the conservative views of many political and church leaders. It was first broadcast in July 1962 and its presenter was Gay Byrne who continued to front the show until his decision to step down in 1999. Between 1962 and 1972 it introduced to viewers a wide variety of national and international entertainment stars: people such as Bing Crosby, The Dubliners and Mary Quant.

However, it was the panel discussions on sometimes controversial subjects that frequently attracted widespread publicity - and, sometimes, an element of notoriety for the immensely popular show. From a lively discussion in January 1963 as to whether the Irish language should be compulsory to a much-discussed and highly-charged discussion of the women's movement in March 1971, *The Late Late Show* made headlines and provoked discussion in the wider society. Even a panel game - such as the one that led to the so-called 'The Bishop and the Nightie' outcry - could provoke controversy and attract criticism from irate county councillors and clergy.

Other programmes had a significant impact on the conduct of public affairs. The current affairs programme *Seven Days*, first broadcast in 1966, frequently incurred the displeasure of the government due to its investigative reporting. In 1966, the government objected to the reporting of its dispute with the National (later, Irish) Farmers' Association, and the Taoiseach, Seán Lemass, described the television service as "an instrument of public policy". In 1969, a report on moneylending in Dublin provoked much reaction and the government established a tribunal of inquiry to look into the authenticity of the claims made in the programme. In 1971, the possibility of RTÉ being used as a medium of propaganda by those who justified the use of violence to try to achieve the unification of the country prompted the government to apply Section 31 of the Broadcasting Act to forbid interviews with members of illegal organisations.

While other developments such as Vatican II and the move towards free trade helped to make the 1960s a decade of substantial social change, the role of RTÉ in opening up areas of discussion and encouraging more questioning attitudes to authority is widely acknowledged by historians. The template of public service broadcasting established in RTÉ's first decade proved remarkably resilient in the decades that followed.

Glossary of important terms: develop your historical literacy skills

Broadcasting Act, 1960	<p>This act set up an authority known as the Radio Éireann (later, Radio Telefís Éireann) Authority whose members were appointed by the government. The Authority had a great deal of autonomy, and the Act required that any government directives which might affect programming be submitted to the Authority in writing.</p> <p>Section 18 of the Act said that, in respect of news, current affairs and any matters of controversy, coverage should be objective and impartial.</p> <p>Although not controversial at the time, Section 31 attracted much criticism after it was first implemented in 1971 in the context of the Northern Ireland ‘Troubles’. (See ‘Section 31’.)</p>
Public service broadcasting	<p>Public service broadcasting refers to programmes that are broadcast for the public benefit rather than for purely commercial purposes. Such programmes include local, national and international news coverage; arts programmes; religious programmes; and programmes that are educational in nature. Public service broadcasting is usually (at least partially) government-funded.</p> <p>In an Irish context, the Public Service Broadcasting Charter (2004) sets out the parameters within which RTÉ must operate and includes the requirement that, “RTÉ programming shall be socially inclusive and shall reflect the lives and concerns of all social strata in Ireland.”</p>
Section 31	<p>Section 31 of the 1960 Broadcasting Act allowed the government of the day to issue a directive to the RTÉ Authority banning the broadcast of specified material or insisting on the broadcasting of certain material.</p> <p>The first directive issued under Section 31 was on 1st October 1971 when the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs instructed the Authority to:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">refrain from broadcasting any matter that could be calculated to promote the aims or activities of any organisation which engages in, promotes, encourages or advocates the attaining of any political objective by violent means.</p>

TAM ratings	<p>TAM stands for “Television audience measurement”.</p> <p>In February 1962, Telefís Éireann signed a contract with Irish TAM Ltd. for the provision of a television audience measurement system which came into effect in April 1962. Cooperating households had a TAM television meter installed and sent weekly reports to Irish TAM.</p> <p>TAM ratings showed which programmes were most popular.</p>
Tribunal of Inquiry	<p>Tribunals of Inquiry are set up by a resolution of both houses of the Oireachtas, the Dáil and the Seanad, to investigate matters of urgent public concern. Unlike a court of law, they have no responsibility or power to administer justice. The findings of their investigations are reported back to the Oireachtas.</p> <p>The Tribunal of Inquiry into the <i>7 Days</i> programme on moneylending was set up under the Tribunals of Inquiry (Evidence) Act, 1921.</p>
Vatican II	<p>The second Vatican Council or Vatican II (1962-1965) was convened by Pope John XXIII to modernise the Catholic Church. It led to many changes in practice, such as celebration of Mass in the vernacular and less strict observance of Lenten fasts. It also encouraged a more questioning attitude towards authority at a time when the new television service in Ireland was having a similar impact. As John H. Whyte notes in his seminal study, <i>Church and State in Modern Ireland, 1923-1970</i> (1971): “The Second Vatican Council encouraged Catholics to speak their minds frankly; the process has been carried to lengths which even the most liberal of the Council Fathers must find disconcerting.” (pp. 354-355)</p>

Biographical notes

Eamonn Andrews (1922 – 1987)

First chairman of the RTÉ Authority.



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Born in Dublin, he was a keen amateur boxer and won the Irish junior middleweight title in 1944. Beginning his working career as an insurance clerk, in 1946 he decided to make a career of broadcasting, working intermittently for Radio Éireann and also appearing on independently-produced sponsored programmes. In 1950 he began presenting programmes for the BBC, being best known initially for his commentaries on boxing matches. In 1951 he became host of the BBC television panel game *What's My Line?* and thus began a long and successful career as a television host.

His biggest success was as presenter of *This is Your Life*, a programme which looked back at the lives of well-known personalities and began with Andrews surprising the unsuspecting personality as he/she went about his/her business, presenting the famous red book and uttering the show's title words, "This is your life!" Andrews hosted the show for the BBC from 1955 to 1964. In 1969 the show transferred to ITV and Andrews again became the host, a position he continued to hold until 1987.

When the Irish government decided to set up a national television service, Andrews was invited to assist. He was appointed chairman of the Radio Éireann (later, RTÉ) Authority and oversaw the launch of the new television service, Telefís Éireann (later, RTÉ) on New Year's Eve, 1961. He resigned as chairman in April 1966. A new Authority had been appointed in 1965 which included advocates for greater use of Irish in programming such as Dónall Ó Móráin, and Andrews was unhappy with this development. He returned to the UK to resume a full-time role in British television.



© RTÉ Archives

Radio and television broadcaster; presenter of *The Late Late Show* from 1962 to 1999.

Born Gabriel Byrne in Dublin, he attended Synge Street CBS and began his career as a broadcaster with Radio Éireann in 1958. As host of *The Late Late Show* he became a household name, and the show enjoyed widespread popularity and generated occasional controversy. By the time he stepped down as presenter in 1999 the show had become the longest-running programme in the world hosted by the same presenter.

Other television work saw him present such popular programmes as *The Rose of Tralee* and *Housewife of the Year*. His radio show *The Gay Byrne Show* ran from 1973 to 1998 and is seen as a pioneer of confessional radio in the Republic of Ireland.

In later years, he has continued to work as a presenter on both TV and radio, through his series of interviews with well-known personalities on *The Meaning of Life* and his Sunday afternoon programme of jazz favourites on Lyric FM.

Charles Mitchel (1920 - 1996)



© RTÉ Archives

RTÉ's first newsreader when the station began broadcasting, he remained popular with viewers until his retirement in 1984. Before his television career began, he had been an actor at the Gate Theatre.

John O'Donoghue (1931 - 2014)



© RTÉ Archives

One of the pioneers of current affairs programmes on RTÉ, his career began as presenter of *Broadsheet*, RTÉ's first current affairs programme, in 1962 and continued with *64*, *65*, *66* and *Seven Days*.

In 1965, he was the first to present television coverage of a general election count in Ireland from a special "Elections Newsroom" in Studio One.

Kevin O’Kelly (1924 - 1994)



© RTÉ Archives

RTÉ journalist. On the *This Week* programme in November 1972, he read a transcription of an interview he had carried out with Seán Mac Stiofáin, chief of staff of the Provisional IRA. This was seen by the government as an attempt to circumvent Section 31 of the Broadcasting Act and led to the sacking of the RTÉ Authority. When Mac Stiofáin was subsequently brought to trial on a charge of membership of the IRA, O’Kelly was called as a witness. On refusing to describe the circumstances in which his interview with Mac Stiofáin took place, he was found to be in contempt of court and sentenced to three months’ imprisonment, two days of which were spent in prison. He subsequently became RTÉ’s religious affairs correspondent, retiring in 1986.

Ed Roth



Ed Roth is in the middle, wearing the dark overcoat.

© RTÉ Archives

First Director-General of RTÉ, an American with extensive television experience. (See p.13) See also <http://www.historyireland.com/20th-century-contemporary-history/a-stranger-among-us-edward-roth-and-the-development-of-telefis-eireann/>

The impact of RTÉ, 1962-1973: timeline

1960		Broadcasting Act established the Radio Éireann (later, Radio Telefís Éireann) Authority which would manage the new television service.
1961	31 December	Telefís Éireann (TÉ) first broadcast.
1962	January	Current affairs programme <i>Broadsheet</i> , presented by John O'Donoghue, began.
1962	July	<i>The Late Late Show</i> first broadcast, presented by Gay Byrne.
1965	January	<i>The Late Late Show</i> panel discussion on Irish language became heated and controversial.
		<i>The Riordans</i> first broadcast (ran until 1979).
	April	General election: first in which television played an important part
1966	February	'The Bishop and the Nightie' controversy following <i>The Late Late Show</i> of the 12 th .
	March-April	TCD student Brian Trevaskis provoked controversy with his criticisms of the Catholic Church on <i>The Late Late Show</i> .
	September	<i>Seven Days</i> (from 1967, <i>7 Days</i>) began and introduced a new investigative approach to current affairs which sometimes provoked controversy.
	October	Row between government minister, Minister for Agriculture Charles Haughey, and TÉ over programme dealing with government's dispute with National (later, Irish) Farmers' Association.
1967	January	<i>Home Truths</i> programme put under pressure by advertisers.
1969	May	Three leading producers (Doolan, Dowling, Quinn) resign from RTÉ.
	November	<i>7 Days</i> programme on moneylending proves controversial. Government establishes Tribunal of Inquiry to investigate methods used by programme-makers.
1971	March	Representatives of Women's Liberation Movement appear on <i>The Late Late Show</i> .
	September	<i>7 Days</i> carries interviews with leading members of the Official and Provisional wings of the IRA. Government decides to invoke Section 31.
	October	Section 31 of Broadcasting Act first invoked.
1972	April	Raidió na Gaeltachta begins transmissions.

The historian Robert J. Savage on some of the people who managed TÉ/RTÉ in its first decade

Ed Roth, first Director-General, 1960-1962

“From the outset Roth made it clear that he had specific ideas about television and the types of programmes that should be broadcast. He clearly understood the government’s position, articulated quite forcefully on a number of occasions, that the service should not become a financial liability and had to generate substantial income as quickly as possible. In interviews with the press, Roth’s desire to feature ‘popular’ programmes that would appeal to the widest possible audience became obvious. In these interviews Roth stressed his firm conviction that television was primarily a medium of entertainment. He often mentioned his fondness for ‘Westerns’ and cautioned that at the outset the service would have to rely on a steady diet of programmes produced outside Ireland.” p.32

Gunnar Rugheimer, Controller of Programmes (Television), 1963-1966

“Rugheimer’s departure had serious consequences for Irish television. By all accounts he was an incredibly energetic professional and a leader who helped shape the culture of television broadcasting in Ireland. His emphasis on developing hard-hitting current affairs programming unsettled many political, cultural and religious elites and was an important part of the transition Ireland experienced throughout the 1960s. As controller of programmes he supported and protected a generation of current affairs producers and writers who tested the limits of public service broadcasting. He held a key position at a critical time, and his departure created a void that proved impossible to fill.” p.101

C.S. (‘Todd’) Andrews, Chairman of the RTÉ Authority, 1966-1970

“The tenure of Todd Andrews as Chairman of the Broadcasting Authority was a turbulent one and his account of the four-year term in his memoir *Man of No Property* provides valuable insight into how he tried to navigate the difficult straits of broadcasting during a tumultuous period in contemporary Irish history. Although he was certainly not a Fianna Fáil ‘hack’, he fully accepted Seán Lemass’s argument that RTÉ was ‘an instrument of public policy and [as] such was responsible to the government’ and makes this clear in his autobiography ... But his support for the government was far from automatic ... Importantly, Andrews took a stand against the government when he supported the *Seven Days* programme on illegal money-lending, a programme that he nevertheless believed contained serious flaws.” p.125

T.P. Hardiman, Director-General, 1968-1975

“Although he hoped to protect and nurture a generation of young and talented producers, he was under constant pressure to rein in some of the more provocative programmes being broadcast. As director-general he understood that the patience of the government was wearing thin and hoped to avoid direct state intervention.” p.130

Robert J. Savage (2010), *A loss of innocence? Television and Irish society 1960-72*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press.

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The following books were consulted in the writing of this booklet; most are cited in the pages that follow.

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Marc Zimmermann (2007), *The History of Dublin Cinemas*. Dublin: Nonsuch Publishing.

RTÉ Archives

There is much of relevance in the online RTÉ Archives online for teachers and students engaged in the study of the case study, *The impact of RTÉ, 1962-1972*. Those elements of the “History of RTÉ” exhibition which relate to the 1960s and 1970s are of particular interest.

To access the material, go to <http://www.rte.ie/archives/exhibitions/681-history-of-rte/> and click on the tabs for Chapters 06 (1960s) and 07 (1970s).

The following are some of the relevant clips from the exhibition:

- President de Valera’s speech on the opening night of the new television service, 31st December 1962 (See page 22.)
- Charles Mitchel, the first television newsreader, on Telefís Éireann, receiving a ‘Jacobs’ award’ in December 1962 (See biographical note, p.10.)
- An excerpt from the *Radharc* programme, a documentary series made by Father Joe Dunn and other Catholic priests for Telefís Éireann/ RTÉ. The series began in 1962 and continued until 1996. A wide range of social and religious issues was covered in its programmes. See also <http://www.rte.ie/archives/exhibitions/1378-radharc/>
- A brief excerpt from an edition of *The Late Late Show* of 1965
- An excerpt from the popular drama series, *The Riordans*, January 1965 (See Source 12, p.31)
- An excerpt from the educational series for farmers, *Telefís Feirme*, 1965
- Introduction to the *7 Days* programme on moneylending, 11th November 1969 (See Sources 15 and 16, pages 38 and 39 respectively.)
- An excerpt from *The Late Late Show* of 8th November 1969 where the three authors of *Sit Down and Be Counted*, all former RTÉ producers are interviewed by Gay Byrne (See Secondary Source 9, page 37)
- Introduction to the 1971 Eurovision Song Contest, held in Dublin, one of the first home-produced colour programmes
- An excerpt from a *7 Days* programme, presented by John O’Donoghue, which reported on the directive under Section 31 of the Broadcasting Act issued by the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs for the first time ever, October 1971 (See Sources, 17, 18 and 19, pages 40 and 41.)

The impact of RTÉ, 1962-1972: a possible line of enquiry

If students are to understand the issues and events of the case study, they will need to explore the reasons for the setting up of Telefís Éireann (later, RTÉ) in 1961, the reasons why certain programmes had a high profile and/or proved controversial at the time, and the nature of the changes in which RTÉ programmes were a significant causative factor. An enquiry question such as the following may be helpful in this regard:

What were the ways in which RTÉ had an impact on Irish society between 1962 and 1972?

In looking at the impact of RTÉ between 1962 and 1972, it may be helpful to look first at developments between 1962 and 1967 when programmes began and developed a profile, sometimes provoking controversy and confrontation. The following five years from 1968 to 1972 proved even more charged as producers resigned, programme makers were taken to court and the Northern ‘Troubles’ prompted Government curbs on radio and television interviews. Beginning with a look at why RTÉ was set up in the first place, the following three stages of enquiry are recommended:

Stage 1: Why was Telefís Éireann (later, RTÉ) set up in 1961?

Stage 2: In what ways did RTÉ have an impact on Irish society between 1962 and 1967?

Stage 3: In what ways did RTÉ have an impact on Irish society between 1968 and 1972?

What are the potential benefits of using these questions to focus on the subject matter of the case study?

In the pages that follow, for the three stages of the enquiry a list of “factors identified in commentaries” is followed by a selection of linked primary source extracts and some secondary source extracts.

While most sources have undergone some degree of editing, teachers may decide to engage in further editing of some documents to facilitate use with their own classes.

A possible ‘hook’

Gay Byrne is a key personality for this syllabus topic and *The Late Late Show* which he presented had a major impact on Irish society between 1962 and 1972 and beyond, as many of the sources in this booklet demonstrate. A *Late Late Show* excerpt from 1979, in which Eamonn Andrews turns the tables on Gay Byrne and asks him questions about *The Late Late Show*, may be a useful ‘intro’ to an exploration of how RTÉ affected Irish society. The clip (lasting 4 minutes, 32 seconds) is currently available on the RTÉ Archives website at <http://www.rte.ie/archives/exhibitions/2112-gay-byrne/633556-would-you-welcome-please-mr-dana-andrews/>

THE LATE LATE SHOW EXCERPT: TRANSCRIPT AND WORKSHEET

Transcript

Gay Byrne [GB]: “Would you welcome please, Mr. Dana Andrews ... here he is.”

Eamonn Andrews [EA]: “Are you ...? Are you ...?”

EA: “Let me explain, Gay, if I may ... that Dana Andrews is at this moment, I would imagine, having a lettuce leaf by the pool in Hollywood ... or on his third dry martini before lunch ...

GB: “The lies!”

EA: ... But I went into cahoots ... or rather ... I was the innocent party really ... with Adrian and Pam and John said ...”

GB: “Cronin, I’ll strangle you ...!”

EA: “ ... said this being the 500th ... although you said it’s near enough not ... but they decided it was ... and they said to me, ‘Would I like to come along and ask you ... so we could salute you and your programme ... 500, seventeen years ... because we all admire you in it so much ... and I ... if it was anyone else, I’d say no, your programme’s over too early ... but knowing you, you’d have a couple of bishops there ... or somebody who eats hairpins or swam the Atlantic, and you wouldn’t be stuck, I know that ... but will you sit down in the other chair and let me talk to you about you ...?’

GB: “The lot ... You wouldn’t believe the lies that I’ve been told this week ... It’s quite extraordinary ... Cadden! The well-known liar, Cadden! You should have seen the read he gave me on Dana Andrews, presumably an entire tissue of lies from beginning ...”

EA: “Absolutely ... and - if you read some of it – actionable, isn’t that true ...?”

GB: “And Pam Collins, where is she?”

EA: “She’s watching you, not very far away from here ...

GB: “Cronin, I’ll strangle you, I’m warning you, I will ...

EA: “Well, the reason ... I mean ... the reason ... not only because it is 500, and seventeen years ... but because I genuinely think ... and I know that your colleagues do ... that this is probably, apart from news, the most important programme that Irish television has produced over that period ... and, congratulations ... I want to ask you about it and about you, right? It really is, it’s part of the scene, part of Ireland. Let me, let me ...”

GB: “Of course, I know that telling lies is nothing new to you ... on the other programme you lead your entire life ...

EA: “No, I never tell lies at all ... just illusions ... but this is not an illusion ... this is a very important programme ... a very important part of the scene. How do you think, over that period of 500, Gay, seriously, how do you feel or can you assess ... how it has changed?

GB: “This is most odd ... most odd, yes ...”

EA: “And it’s very difficult for you, I know ... I’m throwing it at you like this ... no preparation whatsoever.”

GB: “Well, since we’re into it, then, alright! ... Seventeen years ago, I think we realised that we wouldn’t have a never-ending supply of celebrities and personalities and film people and so on ... and we started to make excursions into current affairs and politics and matters of controversial interest and so on ... and I think we’ve reached now a stage where ... the programme has continued to be format-less ... down through the years ... and I’d like to continue it in that way ... Insofar as ... two weeks ago, I suppose, we had a lovely programme with Val Doonican and Mary O’Hara ... Tonight we have a different type of programme. We’ve had our ... I’ve just mentioned ... nuclear at Carnsore ... and we’ve had Seán McDermott Street and various other things ... so I think the thing ... The programme hasn’t changed ... I think the important thing is to keep it different ... on the hop, most weeks ...”

EA: “Do you think that’s one of the reasons it is so popular ...?”

GB: “I think so ... I think that one of the reasons is that it’s live ... and people like the feeling that it is live ... and it’s in Studio 1 here in Montrose every Saturday night ... and that anything can happen ... and they’re prepared to accept it live, warts and all, even the things that go wrong ...”

EA: “Obviously, from what happened tonight, you don’t always meet your guests before they walk across that floor ...”

GB: “Well, you see, this is the most extraordinary thing ... Most times, I do, inside ... but, now and then, somebody might come along and we know ... I mean the story on Dana Andrews ... he’s at dinner, and he’s visiting friends ... and there was nothing unusual ... because the Haleys are here actually to visit friends in New Ross ... they have friends down in New Ross ... they’re going down there tonight or tomorrow morning ... So, Dana Andrews was all set up, he was visiting friends and having dinner and coming along late and ... ok, he’d be there ... and everything like that ... The lies!

Questions/points for discussion on *The Late Late Show* excerpt/transcript

1. Gay Byrne thought Dana Andrews was his guest rather than Eamonn Andrews. From the comments made by Eamonn Andrews, what do you think Dana Andrews was famous for? Support your answer by reference to the text.
2. Eamonn Andrews’ appearance on the show to interview Gay Byrne was planned by three people who worked with him on the show. Their first names were Adrian, Pam and John. See if you can find out what their surnames were.
3. Why had Adrian, Pam and John invited Eamonn Andrews to come and interview Gay Byrne on *The Late Late Show*?
4. Explain Eamonn Andrews’ comments about the kinds of guests who appeared on Gay Byrne’s programme, *The Late Late Show*.
5. When Gay Byrne says of Mr. Cadden, “you should have seen the read he gave me on Dana Andrews”, what can we infer about the role of Mr. Cadden in the show?
6. What do you think Eamonn Andrews means when he says to Gay Byrne that *The Late Late Show* is “part of Ireland”?
7. What reason does Gay Byrne give for “making excursions into current affairs and politics and matters of controversial interest”?
8. What do you think Gay Byrne means when he says, “the programme has continued to be formatless”?
9. In the conversation between the two men, what reasons are given for the show’s on-going popularity?

Enquiry, Stage 1

Why was Telefís Éireann (later, RTÉ) set up in 1961?

Among the factors identified in commentaries are:

- Many people living in the eastern part of the country were already picking up broadcasts from Britain and Northern Ireland. Some people in power regarded some of the broadcast material as objectionable and thought it was time the Republic had its own television service.
- The new service was to “serve the nation” by providing cultural and educational programmes. For some interest groups, its main objective should be to revive the Irish language and promote wider elements of Gaelic culture.
- The new service was also to provide popular entertainment that would attract a large audience, sufficient to win the approval of paying advertisers.

Relevant sources

Source 1

In the following, edited extract from an *Irish Times* report, 21st December 1991, television critic Ken Gray looks back at the early days of Telefís Éireann (later, RTÉ):

On the east coast we had BBC and ITV – filched free, with the aid of huge rooftop aerials – for some years before 1961. But now for the first time we could see programmes made by our own people, prepared and presented by ourselves and about ourselves.

Fulfilling the public service function which Mr. Lemass had stressed on the inaugural [opening] night as well as meeting the statutory obligation to be commercially viable were twin requirements that the first Director General, Ed Roth (rightly) declared to be incompatible.

“The dilemma of Irish television”, he said when he resigned before the end of the first year, “is that it combines two objectives: one to establish and maintain a service which will further national culture and aims and have regard to the prestige of the nation and, secondly, that the service must be a paying enterprise.”

The Irish Times, 21st December, 1991

© The Irish Times

Questions and points for discussion

1. Explain how people on the east coast picked up television reception from BBC and ITV “for some years before 1961”.
2. According to the writer, why was the opening of Telefís Éireann important to people like himself who already had access to television stations transmitting from Britain and Northern Ireland?
3. The second paragraph refers to Telefís Éireann’s “public service function”. How is this function explained by Mr. Roth, as quoted in the third paragraph?
4. According to Mr. Roth what was the other objective of the new television service?
5. Discuss why Mr. Roth saw the combination of the two objectives as a “dilemma”.

Irish Times archive material supplied courtesy of The Irish Times at www.irishtimes.com

Secondary Source 1 (edited)

Signals from British transmitters could be picked up along Ireland's east coast in the 1950s as viewers erected aerials to capture British programmes. The range of these broadcasts increased when the Divis Mountain transmitter became operational in 1955. This enabled approximately 80% of the population of Northern Ireland and many people south of the border to view BBC programmes. These broadcasts created discomfort for political, religious and cultural elites who grew increasingly concerned at the content of programmes which they regarded as objectionable.

Robert J. Savage, *A loss of innocence? Television and Irish society 1960-72*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2010, pp. 10-11.

Questions and points for discussion

1. In the 1950s, what technology did people along the east coast use to pick up BBC programmes? (See image below.)
2. Can you explain why the number of people picking up BBC programmes increased when the Divis Mountain transmitter became operational in 1955?
3. Why did the fact that people in the Republic could receive BBC programmes create "discomfort for political, religious and cultural elites"?



Rooftop aerials similar to those referred to in Secondary Source 1

<http://www.publicdomainpictures.net/view-image.php?image=83386&picture=tv-antenna-aerials-on-roof>
Downloaded 6th January, 2017

Source 2

The following is an edited extract from a report in a supplement to *The Irish Times*, 29th December 1961

Why did Ireland have to have television? The pressure came partly from business interests, well aware that television has been a goldmine everywhere; and it came partly from those who thought that, as a matter of national pride, the Republic should not go on receiving programmes from Britain without attempting to put a service of Irish character and orientation on air.

As soon as British television moved as far as Wales and Manchester, there were enthusiasts in the Dublin area who used skyscraper aerials to pluck those beyond-the-fringe signals out of the sky. The boom began when the Northern Ireland transmitters opened and viewers in the Republic could get more reliable reception.

Telefís Éireann is different in its constitution from both the BBC and ITV in Britain. It is a public corporation with monopoly rights in both radio and television, like the BBC, and it will be supported (in part) by licence fees. But it will also, like ITV, derive revenue from advertising. It must therefore attract the widest possible audience, since more viewers mean more advertising revenue. On the other hand, it must maintain the standard expected of a national service.

The Irish Times, 29th December, 1961

© The Irish Times

Questions and points for discussion

1. What two reasons does the writer give as to why Ireland had to have television?
2. What development in Northern Ireland led to more people in the Republic watching British television?
3. According to the writer, how was Telefís Éireann different from both the BBC and ITV in Britain? Discuss the challenge(s) created by these differences in the light of the remarks made by Ed Roth as reported in Source 1.

Secondary Source 2

The 1960 Broadcasting Act created a service that was given two contradictory objectives. It was required to 'serve the nation' by providing educational and cultural programmes, and it was responsible for providing popular entertainment that would find a large audience and attract rate-paying advertisers. Thus Irish television was established as an awkward amalgam, a commercial public service charged with generating popular programmes that would produce enough revenue to sustain itself while also offering educational and cultural programmes that would inform and educate viewers.

Robert J. Savage, *A loss of innocence? Television and Irish society 1960-72*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2010, pp. 10-11.

Questions and points to consider

1. Discuss what the writer means when he says that "Irish television was established as an awkward amalgam". (See also Sources 1 and 2.)
2. As we work through the rest of the enquiry, watch out for problems or conflict to which this "awkward amalgam" gave rise.

Irish Times archive material supplied courtesy of The Irish Times at www.irishtimes.com

The opening night of Telefís Éireann

70 RTV Guide, December 29, 1961

TELEFÍS ÉIREANN

Opening Night, New Year's Eve, Sunday, December 31, 1961

7.0 OPENING OF TELEFÍS ÉIREANN
For National Anthem.
Uachtarán na hÉireann, **EAMON DE VALERA**, inaugurates the Irish television service.
Addresses by An Taoiseach, **Seán Lemass, T.D.**, and the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs, **Michael Hilliard, T.D.**

7.08 approx. BENEDICTION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT
given by His Grace The Archbishop of Dublin and Primate of Ireland, the **Most Reverend Dr. John Charles McQuaid**, in the Oratory in the television studios at Montrose

7.20 approx. SIOBHAN MCKENNA and MICHAEL MACLIAMMOIR
in an inaugural programme of verse by two great Irish poets *Mise Éire* and *The Fool*, by **Padraig Pearse**, and *Hammer's Song*, by **William Butler Yeats**

7.34 approx. LAST OCTOBER
A brief film memory of

8.15 CEAD MILE FAILTE
Maureen Potter, Jimmy O'Dea and Mary O'Hara
Did you a Hundred Thousand Welcomes in an hour of music, song, ballet and traditional dances.
Recorded in many parts of Dublin.
with **Dermot O'Brien's Cell Band**, **Tom and Paschal**.
The **Radio Éireann Light Orchestra** conducted by **Robert Murphy**.
Choreography by **Norman Maen**.
Produced by **Grant Johnston**, **Gerald Vioraty** and **Chloe Gibson**.
Maureen Potter and Jimmy O'Dea are appearing in the pantomime, "Mother Goose" at the **Gaiety Theatre, Dublin**.

8.15 THE NEWS
with a filmed report of the luncheon held earlier to-day at the **Sherbourne Hotel, Dublin** in honour of those who have assisted in the foundation of Irish television followed by news from abroad.

8.45 approx. IRELAND 1961
A filmed report of major events in Ireland during the year.
Compiled by **Telefís Éireann News Staff**.

10.30 approx. MEET THE PEOPLE
The filmed report of a countryside tour to bring the people of Ireland to the screen for Opening Night.

11.05 approx. RETURN TO THE GRESHAM HOTEL
The cameras return to the Gresham Hotel, Dublin, where **Brendan O'Dowda** will be your Master of Ceremonies until midnight.

10.30 approx. in a cabaret including Vera Moran, Danny Cummins, Patrick O'Hagan, The McDuckers, Nina, The Lily Comerford Dancers
Music for dancing by the **Radio Éireann Light Orchestra**, conducted by **Frank Chacksfield**.

12.0 THE NEW YEAR
Cameras join the people in O'Connell Street, Dublin, as the **Arlane Boys' Band** plays in the New Year.
The night's Outside Broadcasts produced by **Phil Thompson**.

12.20 approx. His Eminence JOHN CARDINAL D'ALTON, Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland
The Cardinal draws the night to a close and speaks to the people of Ireland in the opening hour of 1962.
End of transmission.

SOUND

RADIO ÉIREANN

Athlone: 530 m. (566 K/sec);
Dublin and Cork: 240 m. (1,250 K/sec).

10.25 WEATHER
10.30 HIGH MASS
from Holy Ghost Missionary College, Kilmagee Manor, Dublin

11.15 SIGNPOST
Closedown

12.30 TOMMY O'BRIEN
presents another individual record choice.

6.25 THIS WEEK'S APPEAL
on behalf of Christ The King Girls' Club.
Speaker: **Rev. Dr. Michael O'Carroll, C.S.B.**

6.30 NEWS
6.40 SOCCER SURVEY
presented by **Tony Sheehan**

6.50 NEWS TALKS
A weekly commentary on current affairs at home and abroad presented by **John O'Donoghue**.

7.5 DEAR MY MAM

NEWS TALKS
The programme News Talks at 6.50 every Sunday evening have for the past two years been introduced by **Michael MacDonagh**, whose work as a journalist and public relations officer is widely known. With the re-organisation of the Radio Éireann News Division and the coming of television the programme will from now on be edited internally.
The talks will be introduced to-night by **John O'Donoghue**.

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Archbishop of Dublin, John Charles McQuaid, with Kathleen Lemass, the wife of Taoiseach Seán Lemass, and President Eamon de Valera, in the Television Centre building at RTÉ's Montrose campus in Donnybrook, Dublin, during Telefís Éireann's opening night on New Year's Eve 1961. McQuaid gave the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament from a studio at Montrose for this occasion.

Telefís Éireann (later called RTÉ Television) began broadcasting that evening at 7.00pm. Celebrations took place in the ballroom of the Gresham Hotel from where an outside broadcast unit relayed pictures. The RTV Guide published a report on the evening's celebrations on 5 January 1962.

Enquiry, Stage 2: In what ways did RTÉ have an impact on Irish society between 1962 and 1967?

Among the factors identified in commentaries are:

- From its early days Telefís Éireann and, in particular, *The Late Late Show* attracted criticism from politicians, priests and Irish language enthusiasts for the content and tone of its discussion of issues which had not previously been aired in such a public forum. *The Late Late Show* soon proved enormously popular with the general public.
- From its first current affairs programme *Broadsheet*, RTÉ dealt with politics in a way that many politicians, such as Seán Lemass, found challenging and unacceptable. On the other hand, television coverage of politics and (from 1965) of general elections tended to encourage public interest in political matters.
- The drama series *The Riordans* and *Tolka Row* presented a picture of rural and urban life in Ireland in the 1960s. The former, in particular, raised lots of social issues along the way as the country underwent significant social and economic change.
- Many imported programmes (mostly British and American) proved enormously popular and influential and, partly as a consequence of this, cinema audiences declined.

Relevant sources

Source 3 (edited)

When we got television, admittedly one-channel television, I recall the importance and significance that everybody seemed to attach to *everything* that appeared on the screen. It cannot be overstated. My memory is of people rushing home from work in the evening to look at *Bat Masterson*, *The High Chaparral*, *Have Gun Will Travel*, or, God help us, *The Fugitive*. It was great, it was new, it was exciting and it was ours. The nation worried about the fate of the one-armed man in *The Fugitive*.

But it was the home-made programmes that caused the real stir. New ideas and new terms flowed into every living room in the country. In rapid succession we learned about poverty and illiteracy and subjects that had been taboo and were not mentioned in polite society like divorce and contraception. The first time we mentioned the remotest possibility of divorce in Ireland on *The Late Late Show* some of the audience walked out in protest. And we were merely talking about it!

Gay Byrne, (2004), Introduction to *RTÉ Off Camera: Images from the early years of RTÉ television*. Dublin: Poolbeg Press Ltd.

Questions and points for discussion and research

1. Explain what the writer means by “one-channel television”.
2. See if you can find out what type of series the first three programmes mentioned by the writer were. (Perhaps your grandparents can help.)
3. See if you can find out what aspect of *The Fugitive* caused exasperation and ‘worry’.
4. (a) According to the writer, why was it “the home-made programmes that caused the real stir”?
(b) What example of such a “stir” does the writer give?

Source 4 (edited)

Whether Telefís Éireann would become a murderer or a saviour as far as the Irish language was concerned, was one of the queries put forward by Mr. Michael MacGaoithín of the I.N.T.O. when speaking yesterday at the I.N.T.O. Irish Summer Course in Galway.

While many of the films shown to children on television might not be harmful in their content, said Mr. MacGaoithín, too much of this type of entertainment might injure their minds. There seemed no reason why sports programmes should not be broadcast in Irish, and looking at the general state of the language on Telefís Éireann, less than 3% of broadcasting time was given to Irish.

A paper was also read by Mr. Pádraig Ó Neachtain. Television, he said, was a state organisation, founded and maintained by public money. It had a duty to maintain the traditions and the language of the nation.

The Irish Times, 18th July, 1962

© The Irish Times

Questions and points for discussion

1. Having read the entire source, suggest why Mr. MacGaoithín may have seen Telefís Éireann as a possible 'murderer' of the Irish language.
2. What type of audience was Mr. MacGaoithín addressing? (It will help if you can find out what the abbreviation I.N.T.O. stands for.)
3. Suggest reasons for Mr. MacGaoithín's views on films shown on television.
4. (a) According to Mr. Ó Neachtain, what duty did Telefís Éireann have?
(b) What other objective of Telefís Éireann, as set down in the Broadcasting Act of 1960, is not mentioned by Mr. Ó Neachtain? (See Secondary Source 2.)



Telefís Éireann logo, inspired by traditional St. Brigid's Cross
© RTÉ Archives

Irish Times archive material supplied courtesy of The Irish Times at www.irishtimes.com

Source 5: from a Dáil report in *The Irish Times* (edited)

Mr. J. Leneghan (Ind.) said that the Minister would have to accept responsibility for Radio Éireann and Telefís Éireann.

“I do not think,” he said, “that Telefís Éireann is representative of public opinion in this country. It is a shocking state of affairs that we have now reached a position where a certain minority controls that organisation. I never thought in a country which for 700 years fought for its freedom we would see the day when there would be a notice outside our national television studios, invisible but nevertheless there, stating that ‘no Catholic need apply.’ ”

I see no reason why the views of the minority should be foisted on us, and that we should have to accept them as entertainment. I will not accept that type of entertainment.

The Irish Times, 6th May, 1964

© The Irish Times

Questions and points for discussion

1. What is the main accusation that Deputy Leneghan makes against Telefís Éireann?
2. (a) Discuss what Deputy Leneghan means when he claims that there is an “invisible” notice outside the Telefís Éireann studios stating, ‘no Catholics need apply’.
(b) Do you think it is a fact that there were no Catholics employed in Telefís Éireann in May 1964? (You may need to research this.)
3. When Deputy Leneghan refers to “the minority”, to whom is it likely that he is referring?

Secondary Source 3

Television immediately became a battleground in a way radio had never been. Some of the critics gave the appearance of having been lying in wait in the long grass: the Revd. P. O’Higgins S.J., Assistant Director of the Pioneer Total Abstinence Association, was quickly off the mark to say that he was ‘appalled to see on one of the commercials very young people making whoopee with drinks in their hands’. Other conflicts were more intense, and of longer duration. They were principally in the areas of politics, of culture and of religion.

John Horgan (2001) *Irish Media: a critical history since 1922*. London and New York: Routledge, p.84.

Questions and points for discussion

1. Reading the entire extract, what do you think the writer means when he says that television became a “battleground”?
2. What was it about one of the commercials (advertisements) on Telefís Éireann that so appalled the Revd. P. O’Higgins of the Pioneer Total Abstinence Association?
3. According to the writer, what types of conflict over television programme content were “more intense, and of longer duration”?

Irish Times archive material supplied courtesy of The Irish Times at www.irishtimes.com

Source 6 (edited):
Ken Gray, television critic, 1958-78, reflects on the early days of Telefís Éireann

The big success of the early months was a programme put together somewhat hurriedly as a filler in the summer of 1962, called “The Late Late Show”.

It made its reputation with controversy, some of it absurd – such as the celebrated incident of the Bishop and the Nightie – but some of it serious, about the Irish language, religion, sex and politics.

Indeed it was on “The Late Late Show” that Oliver Flanagan T.D. declared there was no sex in Ireland before television. In a way he was right. There was no popular forum where sex, religion or politics was discussed openly and argued about, before television.

The Irish Times, 21st December, 1991

© The Irish Times

Questions and points for discussion

1. What insights does the writer give us about the origins of *The Late Late Show*?
2. In discussing the reputation for controversy that the programme earned, explain the distinction he makes between “absurd” and “serious”.
3. In what sense does the writer consider Oliver Flanagan T.D. to have been right when he said there was no sex in Ireland before television?

Source 7

The Bishop of Clonfert, the Most Rev. Dr. Thomas Ryan, yesterday delivered a “vigorous protest” against the contents of Saturday night’s Late Late Show on Telefís Éireann in his sermon at eight o’clock Mass in St. Brendan’s Cathedral, Loughrea. He asked the members of the congregation to add their protests in any manner that they thought fit.

During the programme, a married couple from the audience were questioned, as part of a game, about each other’s absence, by the show’s producer and compere, Gay Byrne. While the wife was outside the studio, her husband was asked, among other things, to name the colour of her honeymoon nightdress. He replied that it had been transparent. When she returned, she said that she had not worn one, but then said it had been white.

Dr. Ryan sent a telegram to Mr. Byrne, while the programme was still on the air, saying, “Disgusted with disgraceful performance”. At the same time, the Bishop’s secretary, the Very Rev. M. H. O’Callaghan, Adm., Loughrea, telephoned the Telefís Éireann studios in Dublin to register a protest on behalf of the priests of the diocese against the show which he described as “immoral”.

The Irish Times, 14th February, 1966

© The Irish Times

Questions and points for discussion

1. Identify the ways mentioned in which the Bishop of Clonfert expressed his displeasure with *The Late Late Show* of 12th February 1966?
2. (a) To what part of the content of the show did the Bishop take exception?
(b) Is it likely that such an item would be the subject of strong protests today? Discuss the reasons for your answer.

Archive material supplied courtesy of The Irish Times at www.irishtimes.com



Gay Byrne talking to *The Late Late Show* audience, 1965
© RTÉ Archives

Source 8: Gay Byrne on the morning after the ‘Bishop and the Nightie’ controversy

The next morning Kathleen and I went to ten o’clock Mass in University Church on Stephen’s Green, and coming out we bought both Sunday papers. There it all was; they differed little in their coverage of the story and it was obviously the most serious thing to happen in the country in decades. I remember as we drove up Dawson Street on the way back home, we were overtaken by an old friend of ours, Father Brendan Heffernan. (I had helped him in some little way when he was a curate in Ballyfermot, and he had married us – indeed, later, he also baptised our daughter Crona. He was at that time chaplain to UCD and at present he fulfils a similar function in TCD.) He had seen us coming out of Mass and had read the newspapers; he raced after us to offer his condolences, and I was somewhat relieved to find that he had seen the show and was as much at a loss as I was to know what all the fuss was about; I say I was relieved because I was beginning to think I was going a bit mad.

Gay Byrne (1972) *To Whom It Concerns*. Dublin: Torc Books, pp.74-75.

Questions and points for discussion

1. What evidence is there that Gay Byrne was a practising Catholic at the time of the ‘Bishop and the Nightie’ controversy?
2. The writer refers to purchasing “both Sunday papers”. See if you can find out the titles of the only two Irish newspapers at that time (1966).
3. Is the writer being serious or ironic when he says that, “it was obviously the most serious thing to happen in the country in decades”?
4. What three positions held, at different times, by Fr. Brendan Heffernan does the writer mention?
5. According to the writer, what was Fr. Heffernan’s reaction to the controversy over the previous evening’s *Late Late Show*?
6. Explain Gay Byrne’s reaction when he heard Fr. Heffernan’s views on the show.

Source 9

Following an hour long discussion about Telefís Éireann and the Late Late Show at Carlow Co. Council it was decided to send a resolution to the Minister and the Director General of T.E. vehemently protesting against attacks on the hierarchy and asking that the show be drastically reformed.

Making the proposal Councillor Paddy Cogan referred to a personal insult to the Bishop of Galway and said that in his own opinion there was an organised plan to vilify the bishops. He suspected the work of “an advanced guard of communism”.

Mr. Cogan said that in all countries where communism had got a hold it had been a similar pattern. The Bishops are the pillars of the Church, he said, and if the pillars are attacked there is danger of the edifice falling.

The Irish Times, 6th April, 1966

© The Irish Times

Questions and points for discussion

1. What did the councillors protest about in the resolution sent to the Minister and the Director General of Telefís Éireann?
2. In his speech proposing the resolution, to what incident on *The Late Late Show* does Councillor Paddy Cogan make reference?
3. To what ‘conspiracy theory’ does Councillor Cogan give voice in his speech?
4. The councillors’ resolution said that *The Late Late Show* should be “drastically reformed”. See if you can find out whether this ever happened.

Source 10

The Rev. Leo McCann, parish priest of Glashule and Sallynoggin, yesterday condemned a discussion which took place on R.T.E. during the “Late Late Show” on Saturday night. At the 9.30 Mass, in Sallynoggin, Father McCann said that there was no one on the show who expressed “the proper view”. The trouble with such discussions, he added, was that those participating did not have the standards required. He said that he often wondered whether such people had any standards at all.

Only three people of the entire audience had the courage to present the right point of view on the show, Father McCann said. Before discussions on matters such as sex and pornography took place, there should be study, and the people who spoke should know what they were talking about. Sometimes they needed reminding that Jesus Christ came down on earth to save us.

During the Late Late Show on Saturday night, a long discussion took place between several speakers on the subject of pornography and its possible effects on children.

The Irish Times, 21st November, 1966

© The Irish Times

Questions and points for discussion

1. Having read the entire extract, what was the subject matter of the discussion on *The Late Late Show* to which the Rev. McCann objected?
 2. When the Rev. McCann says there was no one on the show who expressed the ‘proper view’, discuss what you think he means by this.
 3. Before discussion of matters such as those featured on the show, the Rev. McCann says there should be ‘study’. Discuss what you think he means by this.
- Irish Times archive material supplied courtesy of The Irish Times at www.irishtimes.com



UN Secretary-General, U Thant, being interviewed by John O'Donoghue for *Broadsheet*, July 1962
© RTÉ Archives

Secondary Source 4

Lemass wrote to [Pádraig] O'Hanrahan [director of the Government Information Bureau] in September 1962 to complain about *Broadsheet*, a current affairs television programme that greatly annoyed him. He told O'Hanrahan that he did not have an opportunity to see the programme very often but, when he did, he had not been impressed:

I received the impression that it is becoming increasingly a medium for the uncritical presentation of the views of persons associated with various ramps and crank projects.

Robert J. Savage, *A loss of innocence? Television and Irish society 1960-72*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2010, p. 59.

Questions and points for discussion

1. When Lemass wrote to O'Hanrahan in September 1962, what different positions did the two men hold at the time?
2. What kind of programme was *Broadsheet*, the programme about which Lemass complained?
3. Explain the reason why Lemass was complaining about the programme.

Secondary Source 5

The election of April 1965 has been described as ‘the first really “modern” election in the Republic’, not least because it was the first election in which television played an important part. RTE (Radio Telefís Éireann) had begun broadcasting on 31 December 1961 and one-third of the population are reckoned to have watched the party political broadcasts, many more than had listened to the radio broadcasts in 1957 and 1961.

Ronan Fanning (1983) *Independent Ireland*. Dublin: Helicon Limited, p.198.

Secondary Source 6

The 1965 general election was the first to have received widespread television coverage. One member in particular of the panel of experts had displayed indefatigable energy with an almost unbroken ten-hour performance. It stood him in good stead when he launched his own political career in the Senate election a few weeks later. In a cloud of statistics and high-velocity opinions, Garret FitzGerald had arrived in the political arena.

Fergal Tobin (1984) *The Best of Decades: Ireland in the 1960s*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, p.137.

Questions and points for discussion

1. How does the writer of Secondary Source 5 back up his statement that “television played an important part in the 1965 election”?
2. One of the panel of experts who appeared in the television coverage of the 1965 election was Garret FitzGerald (later Fine Gael party leader and Taoiseach). What impressions of Dr. FitzGerald are conveyed by the writer of Secondary Source 6?

Source 11: Taoiseach, Seán Lemass, speaking in Dáil Éireann on 12th October 1966

Note: The context for this speech was RTÉ coverage of a row between the Minister for Agriculture, Charles J. Haughey, and the National Farmers’ Association (NFA) and its leader, Rickard Deasy. Mr. Haughey had called the newsroom directly to complain about the station’s coverage of the dispute. The Labour Party had accused the government of interfering in the “free dissemination of news and comment on Telefís Éireann”.

Radio Telefís Éireann was set up by legislation as an instrument of public policy and as such is responsible to the government. The government have overall responsibility for its conduct and especially the obligation to ensure that its programmes do not offend against the public interest or conflict with national policy as defined in legislation. To this extent the government reject the view that Radio Telefís Éireann should be, either generally or in regard to its current affairs and news programmes, completely independent of Government supervision.

Dáil Debates, Vol. 224, October 12, 1966. Cited in Savage (2010), p.83

Questions and points for discussion

1. Discuss why you think critics of Lemass objected to his description of RTÉ as “an instrument of public policy”.
2. According to Lemass, what responsibility did the government have in respect of RTÉ?
3. Does the last sentence of the excerpt suggest that Lemass wanted the government to have complete control over RTÉ? Explain your answer.

Source 12: TV critic Ken Gray on *The Riordans*

Basically, “The Riordans” is as much “soap opera” as “Tolka Row”. Its story line is a succession of minor domestic crises, the romantic affairs of Benjy and Jude, the winter marriage of Minnie Heffernan and Batty. But unlike “Tolka Row”, which is concerned solely with such trivialities, “The Riordans” has a broader base and involves its characters in all the day to day activities of the farming family. At present, Tom Riordan is engaged in building up his dairy herd and is seeking credit facilities and long-term planning advice to do it; Benjy and his friends from Macra are trying to talk the creamery management into setting up a pig-fattening situation.

It is a measure of the success of Wesley Burrowes’s scriptwriting that he has been able to intertwine painlessly into the unending family saga the contents of many a Department of Agriculture pamphlet. And a credit to the actors concerned that they have been able to put the message across and still remain in character, and interesting to the townsman.

The Irish Times, 10th February, 1966

© The Irish Times

Questions and points for discussion

1. What features of *The Riordans* made it a ‘soap opera’?
2. How was *The Riordans* different from another Telefís Éireann soap opera *Tolka Row*?
3. Discuss what the writer means when he compliments the scriptwriter for being able to “interweave painlessly into the unending family saga the contents of many a Department of Agriculture pamphlet”.



Still from *The Riordans*, 1969

© RTÉ Archives

Irish Times archive material supplied courtesy of The Irish Times at www.irishtimes.com

Secondary Source 7

Irish Television (Telefís Éireann) finally went on air on New Year's Eve 1961. News programmes, chat shows and 'soap operas' (named after the interspersed detergent advertisements) were staple parts of the daily TV broadcasts from early on. Cinemas, which until now had supplied complete entertainment packages consisting of newsreels, cartoons, shorts, feature films and variety shows - in some cases even coupled with restaurant dinners – now faced serious growing competition.

When broadcasts grew in length as well as variety, incorporating more and more feature films, attendance figures in cinemas slumped dramatically. The heyday of cinema was over. In spite of the slow but steady recovery from around 1990 onwards attendance figures of the Golden Age have not been matched since television shifted the balance.

Marc Zimmermann (2007), *The History of Dublin Cinemas*. Dublin: Nonsuch Publishing, p. 26.

Note: In the history of cinema, the term 'Golden Age' is used to describe the period from the 1930s to the 1950s.

Questions and points for discussion

1. What types of programmes were regular features of the TÉ/RTÉ daily broadcasts from its early days according to the writer?
2. Discuss what the writer means when he says that, until the arrival of television, cinemas "had supplied complete entertainment packages".
3. According to the writer, what developments in television caused attendance figures in cinemas to slump dramatically?
4. Discuss what the writer means when he says that, "The heyday of cinema was over."



The Carlton Cinema, O'Connell Street, Dublin, in 1967 (closed 1994)

© RTÉ Archives

Enquiry, Stage 3: In what ways did RTÉ have an impact on Irish society between 1968 and 1972?

Among the factors identified in commentaries are:

- *The Late Late Show* remained both popular and controversial. It both reflected and influenced social change. In 1971, it became an important forum for discussion of the Irish Women's Liberation Movement manifesto.
- In current affairs, the programme *7 Days* established a reputation for investigative reporting which led to clashes with the legal and political systems.
- The controversial resignations of three producers (Bob Quinn, Jack Dowling and Lelia Doolan) in 1969 led to widespread discussion of the tensions between public service broadcasting and commercial interests.
- As the 'Troubles' broke out in Northern Ireland, the reporting of issues relating to the North became a source of friction between RTÉ and the government.

Relevant sources

Source 13: A letter writer to *The Irish Times* (edited)

Being a taxpayer, and the holder of an R.T.V. licence, I contribute to the financing of Telefís Éireann programmes. I have a decided objection that my contributions to any State or semi-State institution should be devoted to paying any wanton spiller of human blood to come before Telefís Éireann viewers, to revel and gloat over their gory mutilations of their fellow human beings.

Some of that repulsive element were afforded that opportunity on last Saturday night on the Late, Late Show. Please allow me the favour of your newspaper's columns to make my protest against this apparent utter disregard for the feelings of decent people.

If Mr. Gay Byrne and his colleagues in Telefís Éireann must exercise to horrify as well as edify, surely it should be possible for them to do this without resorting to the parading or limelighting of knifers and stabbers, some of whom could be regarded as potential killers.

There were highly cultured decent people both within and without the R.T.V. studios viewing and listening, and with all due respect to Mr. Gay Byrne, they deserved better of himself and his colleagues.

The Irish Times, 16th February, 1968

© The Irish Times

Questions and points for discussion

1. Why does the letter writer mention that he is a taxpayer and the holder of a television licence?
 2. The guests on the show to whom the letter writer referred were young people. What image of these people does the letter writer build up? Explain your answer.
 3. According to the letter writer, why should people such as those described not appear on *The Late Late Show*?
 4. (a) Discuss the distinction made by the letter writer between the efforts of television programme makers to "horrify" and to "edify".
(b) Which aim, to "horrify" or to "edify", does the letter writer appear to support?
- Irish Times archive material supplied courtesy of The Irish Times at www.irishtimes.com



Gay Byrne interviewing three 'unidentified young men' on the *Late Late Show* of 10th February 1968
© RTÉ Archives

Source 14: Ken Gray, *Irish Times* television critic on the on-going popularity of *The Late Late Show*

The strength of the "Late Late Show" – and it is still, after seven years, one of the strongest cards in R.T.É.'s hand – is that so many people complain about it. It seems to me that this proves two things (1) that a great number of people watch it and (2) that it provokes in them some kind of reaction. So much of what goes out on television goes unwatched, or is so bland that it doesn't really matter whether it is watched or not, that a show which constantly draws criticism is obviously fulfilling the basic function of involving the audience.

The Irish Times, 6th February, 1969

© The Irish Times

Questions and points for discussion

1. For how many years had *The Late Late Show* been running when the writer made the above comments?
2. The writer says that the many complaints made against *The Late Late Show* seem to him to prove two things. What is the first of these things?
3. Why does the writer seem to regard it as a good thing that *The Late Late Show* provokes in its viewers "some kind of reaction"?

Irish Times archive material supplied courtesy of The Irish Times at www.irishtimes.com

The Late Late Show specials

From time to time, *The Late Late Show* was given over to extended discussion of one issue or phenomenon. Such programmes are often referred to as ‘specials’.

One of the first examples was the show of 13th May 1967. It became known as the ‘Black and White Minister Show’ and featured an all-priest panel with clergy making up about half of the studio audience. The panelists included Father Fergal O’Connor, lecturer in Politics at UCD. The show proved enormously popular.

Another type of ‘special’ was where some well-known personality was celebrated and honoured. One such show celebrated the life and career of the actor and co-founder of the Gate Theatre in Dublin, Mícheál MacLiammóir.

Other ‘specials’ included a celebration of Ireland’s ‘gentlemen of the turf’ – jockeys, trainers, bookies, horse owners and others – and an extended ‘courtroom’ inquiry into Ireland’s entry into the EEC.

One ‘special’ that attracted much favourable comment dealt with the lives of Irish travellers, including Grannie Connors (see photograph below). It was broadcast on 22nd November 1969. Robert J. Savage, in his *A loss of innocence: Television and Irish society 1960-72*, cites the views of a contemporary television critic, Nora Relihan, and those of a cultural historian, Lance Pettitt, reviewing the impact of *The Late Late Show* in the year 2000.

Nora Relihan, *The Corkman*, 12th December 1969: “This show’s extraordinary success was due in no small measure to Mr Byrne’s approach. One might have thought in advance that he would be both patronising and facetious. To his credit he was neither, and in fact displayed a gentleness and kindness which in different situations might be labelled ‘soft’.”

Lance Pettitt (2000), *Screening Ireland: Film and Television Representation*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp.169-170: “[The Programme] provoked legislative changes and shifted the boundaries of taboos in Irish social discourse on a variety of topics including unmarried mothers, Travellers’ rights, infanticide, different kinds of sexuality, marriage and clerical celibacy.”



© RTÉ Archives

Secondary Source 8 (edited)

In early 1971 the I[rish] W[omen's] L[iberation] M[ovement] published a pamphlet outlining the demands of the group, titled *Irish Women – Chains or Change?* One of the key demands of the IWLM was for the marriage ban that restricted the ability to be employed and promoted within the public sector. The IWLM was determined to make waves and call attention to the institutionalised discrimination that they argued relegated women to the role of second-class citizenship. In March 1971 Gay Byrne offered the group *The Late Late Show* as a platform to present their case. Speakers included Senator Mary Robinson, the historian Mary Cullen, journalist Nell McCafferty and Lelia Doolan, who addressed issues concerning women, education and the media. In spite of the careful planning the programme became chaotic as the audience became involved in heated arguments. An unprecedented appearance by the Fine Gael T.D., Garrett FitzGerald, added to the excitement and confusion of the broadcast. FitzGerald took exception to complaints by members that Dáil Deputies did not care about women's issues. Once again *The Late Late Show* proved itself an important outlet for presenting and debating controversial contemporary issues.

Robert J. Savage, *A loss of innocence? Television and Irish society 1960-72*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2010, pp. 127-128.

Questions and points for discussion

1. What information does the writer give about the 1971 pamphlet *Chains or Change?*
2. In the second sentence, the writer identifies one of the 'chains' that placed restrictions on what women could do or achieve. What was that 'chain'? (You may need to consult with your teacher to make sure that you understand the point fully.)
3. One of the four women who represented the Irish Women's Liberation Movement (IWLM) on the show had previously been an RTÉ producer. Which one?
4. The Fine Gael T.D. Garret FitzGerald left his sitting room to go into the RTÉ studio during the programme. What provoked this reaction on his part?
5. What judgement does the writer make on the importance of *The Late Late Show*, based partly on the experience of this March 1971 edition?



Lelia Doolan, c.1965
© RTÉ Archives

Note: In 1969, three RTÉ producers (including Doolan) resigned. They had become increasingly disillusioned with the commercial pressures that constrained their attempts to produce quality public service programming. In Secondary Source 9, historian Robert J. Savage explains how it happened.

Secondary Source 9 (edited)

[Bob] Quinn had written an open letter from Clare Island in May 1969 to his producer colleagues. He felt he had to challenge the 'Factory' – as he described the station. If this was intended as an incendiary device, it achieved its purpose. Todd Andrews observed it all from the chairman's office. [The Director-General] Hardiman advised him that resignations were threatened. The advice from Andrews was to keep pen and paper to hand to confirm the resignations. He appreciated that such a hardline approach was inimical to Hardiman but eventually this was the route taken.

It was taken with reluctance by Hardiman – especially in the case of Lelia Doolan, for whom he had a high regard – but in the course of the widespread press coverage of the ongoing troubles in RTÉ, she had accused management of 'hypocrisy, lack of candour, lack of trust and trivialising prevarication'. Since, as head of Light Entertainment, she was herself part of senior management, Hardiman felt he had no choice but to instruct her to end what he reckoned was a public campaign of dissent. Doolan promptly resigned. Jack Dowling, producer of *Home Truths*, a consumer programme which had controversially challenged many claims by RTÉ's advertisers, also resigned.

Some few months later, Dowling, Doolan and Quinn published a book which reopened their campaign for soul-searching within RTÉ: *Sit Down and Be Counted*.

John Bowman (2010), *Window and Mirror: RTÉ Television, 1961-2011*. Cork: The Collins Press, pp. 113-114.

Questions and points for discussion

1. Why did Bob Quinn write a letter to his producer colleagues in May 1969?
2. What effect did this letter have on relations between some producers and management in RTÉ?
3. What management positions were held at the time by Todd Andrews and T.P. Hardiman?
4. What circumstances led to the resignation of Lelia Doolan as an RTÉ producer?
5. Jack Dowling also resigned. What evidence is there in the passage to explain the reasons for his disagreements with RTÉ?
6. See if you can find out why the book written by the former producers was entitled, *Sit Down and Be Counted*.



Lelia Doolan, Bob Quinn and Jack Dowling on *The Late Late Show* of 8th November 1969

© RTÉ Archives



John O'Donoghue interviewing traveller children at Ballyfermot for a *7 Days* programme, January 1968
© RTÉ Archives

Source 15 (edited)

The first public sitting of the Tribunal of Inquiry into the recent “7 Days” television programme into illegal moneylending will be held in the Four Courts, Dublin, today.

The tribunal, which was set up by a resolution from the Taoiseach, Mr. Lynch, and passed by the Dáil and Senate, has as its terms of reference the following:

1. The planning, preparation, arrangement, production and presentation of the recent television programme on illegal moneylending.
2. The authenticity of the programme.
3. The inquiries on behalf of Radio Telefís Éireann which relate to the programme.
4. The inquiries on behalf of the Garda Síochána which relate to the programme.

The Irish Times, 6th January, 1970

© The Irish Times

Questions and points for discussion

1. How is a Tribunal of Inquiry different from a criminal trial?
2. Explain what is meant by a “public sitting” of the Tribunal.
3. Whose approval had to be given before the Tribunal of Inquiry could be set up?
4. Whose activities was the Tribunal to investigate: the illegal moneylenders or RTÉ or the Garda Síochána? Give reasons for your answer?

Irish Times archive material supplied courtesy of The Irish Times at www.irishtimes.com

Source 16 (edited)

The report of the Tribunal of Inquiry into the “7 Days” programme on moneylending is soon to be placed before a meeting of the Cabinet.

The report will be placed before the Oireachtas and will almost certainly be the subject of a long debate, for the inquiry was not only the longest but the most expensive in the Republic. A member of the Bar has estimated the cost at £200,000.

The “7 Days” feature on moneylending was broadcast on November 11th last, and led to controversy about the extent of moneylenders’ operations in Dublin, though not quite so much controversy as the decision to establish the tribunal which was taken by the Dáil on December 17th and by the Senate the next day.

The Irish Times, 18th August, 1970

© The Irish Times

Questions and points for discussion

1. What does the writer mean when he says that, “The report will be placed before the Oireachtas”?
2. Why does the writer expect that the report “will almost certainly be the subject of a long debate”?
3. Give the full date of the *7 Days* feature on moneylending.
4. What does the writer say was even more controversial than the programme on moneylending? Explain what he means by this.



The members of the RTÉ Authority, May 1971 (See Sources 17 and 19.)
Members include (in front row) Dónall Ó Móráin (second from left), Phillis Bean Uí Cheallaigh (fourth from left) and T.W. Moody (extreme right)

© RTÉ Archive

Irish Times archive material supplied courtesy of The Irish Times at www.irishtimes.com

Source 17 (edited)

The Government last night restricted R.T.É. reporting of activities associated with illegal organisations. A directive issued by the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs, Mr. Collins, to the R.T.É. Authority invoked Section 31 of the Broadcasting Authority Act, 1960, for the first time.

The Minister ordered the Authority to “refrain from broadcasting any matter that could be calculated to promote the aims or activities of any organisation which engaged in, promotes, encourages or advocates the attaining of any political objective by violent means.” Mr. Collins explained that he was acting in pursuance of a Government decision.

Last night’s Government announcement was predictable. For some time, there has been an uneasy relationship between the R.T.É. Authority and the Government. It dates back as far as the Seven Days moneylending tribunal. The Authority strongly resisted the criticisms made by the Tribunal and stood firmly by the programme staff and their work.

Last night it was felt that the recent “Seven Days” programme which featured both Official and Provisional I.R.A. leaders, was the turning point. On that programme Mr. Seán MacStiofáin (of the Provisionals) and Mr. Cathal Goulding (of the Official I.R.A.) discussed the outcome of the Chequers talks and both denounced the talks and the politicians.

The Irish Times, 2nd October 1971

© The Irish Times

Questions and points for discussion

1. What legislation gave the government the power to restrict “RTÉ reporting of activities associated with illegal organisations”? Explain your answer.
2. What was the title of the government minister responsible for RTÉ at the time?
3. Discuss the meaning of the order given to the RTÉ Authority as quoted in the second paragraph.
4. Explain why there had been “an uneasy relationship between the RTÉ Authority and the Government for some time”.
5. What does the writer identify as the “turning point” that prompted the government to issue the order to the RTÉ Authority? Explain in detail.



Seán Mac Stiofáin addressing the Sinn Féin (Provisional) ard fheis, October 1971

© RTÉ Archives

Irish Times archive material supplied courtesy of The Irish Times at www.irishtimes.com

Source 18: Television critic, Ken Gray, on Section 31 (edited)

Mr. Ruairí Ó Brádaigh was asked on what may be his last television appearance for some time to justify the continuance of the campaign of violence in the North. He did not make a very impressive showing. [However] to suggest that the views of the people for whom Mr. Ó Brádaigh speaks are not relevant and important to an understanding of the general situation is as much nonsense as to suggest that by giving him television time R.T.É. is in any way supporting his views.

Certainly there are not many people who seem to understand exactly how the Government intends Section 31 to be interpreted. And not knowing for sure who is allowed to say what imposes upon R.T.É. producers and interviewers a form of self-censorship that very probably cuts across their journalistic instincts.

The Irish Times, Monday, 12th June, 1972

© The Irish Times

Questions and points for discussion

1. What is the writer's view of Ruairí Ó Brádaigh's performance on "what may be his last television appearance for some time"? Explain your answer
2. Explain the writer's attitude towards Ruairí Ó Brádaigh being allowed to appear on television to express the views of the people he represents.
3. Does the writer regard Section 31 (of the Broadcasting Act 1960) as a good thing or a bad thing? Explain your answer.

Source 19: the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs responds in the Dáil to criticism of the government decision to sack the RTÉ Authority on 24th November 1972

Mr. Collins said that during the debate Deputies had stated that he had refused to give the Authority a clarification of the directive and that his reaction was brutal, imperious and heavy-handed in the way he dismissed the Authority. The fact was that the Authority was aware of the situation and of the uneasiness the Government felt in relation to current affairs programmes in R.T.É.

On November 19th last the substance of an interview with Mr. MacStiofáin had been broadcast by RTÉ. The authority recognised that an error had been made and they described it as an "editorial error" without having the courage to accept responsibility for it themselves instead of making it the responsibility of subordinates.

In view of their total failure to observe the directive he made no apology for dismissing them.

The Irish Times, 14th December, 1972

© The Irish Times

Questions and points for discussion

1. What was the directive to which Mr. Collins referred during the Dáil debate on the sacking of the RTÉ Authority? (See Source 17 if you are not sure.)
2. How did Mr. Collins defend himself against accusations that he had been "brutal, imperious and heavy-handed in the way he dismissed the Authority"?
3. Explain why Mr. Collins believed the RTÉ Authority deserved to be sacked.

Irish Times archive material supplied courtesy of The Irish Times at www.irishtimes.com

Supplementary images

Question for discussion

In what ways do the following images expand our understanding of the impact of RTÉ on Irish society between 1962 and 1972?



Still from Telefís Scoile, an educational series for schools
© RTÉ Archives



Still from Telefís Feirme, an educational series for farmers
© RTÉ Archives

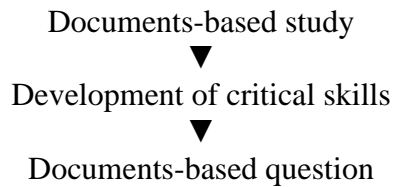


A broadcaster destined to make his mark in British television
© RTÉ Archives



A still from *Tolka Row*
(See Source 12, p.31)
© RTÉ Archives

A critical skills exercise



The Leaving Certificate History syllabus states that the documents-based study is “the primary means of developing [students’] skills in working with evidence”. (p.5)
The syllabus also states that, in the examination, the documents-based question “will test candidates’ ability to interrogate, correlate and evaluate a particular body of evidence”. (p.15)

Rationale for card sorts

In a card sort, cards with text (single words, phrases, sentences) are grouped or ranked according to particular criteria. Card sorts are good in helping students to make connections and form judgements. By having the text on cards, students can move them around, group them and, when necessary, change their minds. This approach promotes discussion and collaborative learning.

The intention of the critical skills exercise on the pages that follow is to illustrate in a practical and active manner the type of critical skills that the documents-based study is designed to develop. Essentially, the purpose of the exercise is to encourage students to THINK by discussing snippets of evidence and making judgements on their import by deciding whether they support or oppose the given proposition. The PLAY element is important and the exercise should be an engaging one for students. The intention is not to come up with answers that are either ‘right’ or ‘wrong’: much of the value of the exercise is in the process itself. That said, it should be possible to reach consensus in most cases and to clarify misunderstandings – where these arise – in the process.

In literacy development, such approaches can play a pivotal role as students engage together in purposeful reading and discussion of text and are active participants in the learning process.

What is involved in the critical skills exercise

Each group of 4-5 students is given an A4 sheet with the proposition at the top of the page and two columns headed: **Agrees** and **Disagrees**. Each group is also given an envelope containing 8 short documentary extracts – each on its own small strip of paper or cardboard – and the task is to discuss with each other the appropriate column in which to place each extract. When each group has reached its conclusions, the outcome of the exercise is discussed in a whole group setting.

Note: Since some of the sources are primary and others secondary, it may also be helpful to invite students to distinguish between the two types.

Proposition: RTÉ had a generally positive impact on Irish society between 1962 and 1972.

Place each of the secondary source extracts in the appropriate column, depending on whether you think it agrees or disagrees with the above proposition. If the group cannot agree on whether a particular extract agrees or disagrees with the proposition, place it along the dividing line in the middle and wait to hear what other groups have to say about the extract.

Agrees	Disagrees

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Source A</i></p> <p>Councillor Brendan Little said that it was the business of the Council to object against scurrility, anti-clericalism and blatant attacks on the Catholic Church. He decried the lack of effort to get across the real national image.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Source E</i></p> <p>If there is one thing that television ought to be doing it is opening up new lines of thought. Maybe the ‘Late Late Show’ doesn’t always succeed in this ... but, on the whole, it seems to try harder and to come nearer to it than any other show on R.T.É.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Source B</i></p> <p>The impact of television on the cinema industry in Ireland proved to be almost fatal.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Source F</i></p> <p>It [RTÉ] is simply the vehicle for the frustrated fantasies of ad-men, the megalomania of insane technocrats and the sanctification of the acts of a conservative government.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Source C</i></p> <p>It is not reasonable to suggest that there was a deliberate conspiracy in TE against the language ... But the circumstances of the time in which it was established ... made it inevitable that it would be perceived by Irish-Irelanders as a hostile force.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Source G</i></p> <p>The real question in fact is to what extent television is merely reflecting what happens and to what extent it is imposing new and more violent patterns of behaviour upon those who want to claim public attention.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Source D</i></p> <p>Television became an important part of the age of Lemass, and an agent in the transformation of Irish society that characterised his tenure as Taoiseach.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Source H</i></p> <p>The opening up of a public debate on a wide range of social and cultural issues and standards was powerfully stimulated by the growth of television ...</p>

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Source E</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ken Gray, television critic</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>The Irish Times</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">6th February, 1969</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Source A</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Report of meeting of Carlow County Council (edited)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>The Irish Times</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">6th April, 1966</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Source F</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Bob Quinn</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Letter sent to RTÉ in 1968, reproduced in Bob Quinn <i>Maverick: A Dissident View of Broadcasting Today</i> (2001). pp.xxxiv-xxxv</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Source B</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">John Bowman</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Window and Mirror: RTÉ Television 1961-2011</i> (2011)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">p.36</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Source G</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ken Gray, television critic</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>The Irish Times</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">1st March, 1971</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Source C</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Fergal Tobin</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>The Best of Decades: Ireland in the 1960s</i> (1984). p.66</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Source H</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh</p> <p style="text-align: center;">De Valera and the Irish People, in Joseph Lee and Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh (ed.) <i>The Age of De Valera</i> (1982). pp.200-201.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Source D</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Robert Savage</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Introducing television in the age of Seán Lemass, in Brian Girvin and Gary Murphy (ed.) <i>The Lemass Era: Politics and Society in the Ireland of Seán Lemass</i> (2005), p.214.</p>

Historians' views about the impact of RTÉ, 1962-1972

Secondary Source A

Television has been a growing influence in Ireland from the early fifties, since the British programmes could be received over a considerable portion of the country, including the main population centre, Dublin. But its real importance for Irish culture has come with the opening of a national television service, Telefís Éireann, on New Year's Day, 1962. Television is a medium which requires controversy. A newspaper can get away with a single, slanted presentation of views for years on end; but a television discussion will be intolerably dull unless the participants disagree with each other. Telefís Éireann has come to realise that this applies to religious discussions as much as to any others, and as time has gone on it has allowed increasing freedom of discussion on religious topics. Out of many possible examples, two may be mentioned. One was Mr Michael Viney's programme, 'Too Many Children?' broadcast late in 1966, in which Dublin mothers discussed frankly their attitudes to family planning. The other is Mr Gay Byrne's *Late Late Show*, put on every Saturday night throughout most of the year, which is Telefís Éireann's most popular discussion programme, and which often tackles religious topics. If there is much more public discussion among Irish Catholics than there used to be, it cannot entirely be attributed to the influence of the Vatican Council; the indigenous factor of a local television service must be taken into account as well.

J.H. Whyte (1971) *Church and State in Modern Ireland, 1923-1970*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan Ltd., p. 358.

Secondary Source B

Mention has already been made of Telefís Éireann which began broadcasting in 1962 and it is as difficult to calculate the impact as it is to exaggerate the impact of this development. Put crudely, the Irish people now had a window on the world never before open to them; and that window opened on a strange and exciting vista which neither state nor church authorities could any longer hide from their gaze. And gaze they did at RTE on some 348,000 sets in the 680,000 homes in the mid-sixties, 137,000 of which could by then receive ITV as well as BBC. The culture in which they became rapidly immersed was essentially Anglo-American or mid-Atlantic, as the accents which some Irish broadcasters began to affect well illustrated, a culture rooted in the materialism of the American dream and wholly alien to the traditional values inculcated by church and state in independent Ireland. Leaders of church and state alike, moreover, were soon asked to submit to interrogation on television – either that or allow their viewpoint to go increasingly unseen and unheard and this was the option chosen by some, such as Archbishop McQuaid of Dublin. Their authority was accordingly undermined in two ways: first, because the manner of much of RTE's political broadcasting, based on British and American models, was more confrontational and inquisitorial than deferential; second, because, for the general public, RTE rapidly assumed the aspect of an alternative source of authority. Gay Byrne's *Late Late Show*, which became a veritable national institution on Saturday nights, was but the most striking example: intrinsically Irish, generally bourgeois and often parochial in its attitudes, it nevertheless played a crucial social role by providing a forum for public discussion of subjects which had hitherto been taboo. Contraception and other issues of sexual morality were cases in point ...

Ronan Fanning (1983) *Independent Ireland*. Dublin: Helicon Limited, pp.199-200.

Secondary Source C

A range of important news, current affairs and chat show, the most powerful being Gay Byrne's 'The Late, Late Show', were produced. Politicians were obliged to make the transfer to the world of the sound-bite and instant comment. This was not a world in which Lemass personally felt very comfortable. But the younger members of his cabinet were more televisual and adaptive; Jack Lynch, Charles Haughey, and Donough O'Malley were among the new breed.

Dermot Keogh (1994) *Twentieth-Century Ireland: Nation and State*. Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, p.253

Secondary Source D

Irish television was created at the beginning of a decade of cultural transformation and political debate. In consequence its relationship with the authorities in church and state was more fraught than that of radio had ever been. The discussion programme *The Late, Late Show* (1962 -) was involved in a series of controversies arising out of frivolous or iconoclastic studio discussion of previously sacrosanct personalities and doctrines. The current affairs programme *Seven Days* (1966 -) regularly incurred disapproval for what were in Ireland novel techniques of investigative reporting. In 1966 the Fianna Fáil government, objecting to reporting of its dispute with the Irish Farmers' Association, provoked controversy by its claim that RTE, as a state broadcasting service was 'an instrument of public policy'. From 1969 the main focus of conflict has switched to reporting of the revived Northern Ireland conflict. In 1971 the government issued an order under Section 31 of the Broadcasting Act restricting reports on the activities of illegal organisations. The following year the entire RTE authority was dismissed for having sanctioned an interview with an IRA spokesman. Restrictions were further tightened in 1976 and remained a source of controversy until their removal following the IRA ceasefire in 1994.

S.J. Connolly (1998), From entry on 'television', in S. J. Connolly (ed.) *The Oxford Companion to Irish History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.537.

Secondary Source E

The most dramatic conflict in this area took place in 1966, shortly before Lemass retired. The government was in conflict with the National Farmers' Association about agricultural policy, and it became known that a cabinet minister had contacted the television station unofficially to complain about an alleged lack of balance on the issue in one of its news broadcasts. Queried about this in the Dáil, Lemass made no bones about it: the government, he said, would take such action by way of making representations or otherwise as might be necessary to ensure that Radio Telefís Éireann (RTE) did not deviate from the due performance of its duty.

John Horgan (2001) *Irish Media: a critical history since 1922*. London and New York: Routledge, p.85.

Secondary Source F

Television was a critical component in the transformation that altered Irish society throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s. During this period television was *not* a passive actor, but an active agent often aggressively testing the limits of the medium and the patience of governments. Indeed television not only presented news but often created news and controversy.

Robert J. Savage (2010) *A loss of innocence? Television and Irish society 1960-1972*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, p.383.

Interrogating the historians

Our enquiry has focused on the question:

What were the ways in which RTÉ had an impact on Irish society between 1962 and 1972?

1. (a) Which historians mention *The Late Late Show* as having an important impact? Give some examples of the types of impact identified.
(b) Which historians make reference to the way in which *The Late Late Show* encouraged more open public discussion?
(c) Which historians mention how *The Late Late Show* was frequently controversial because of matters discussed or comments made on the show? What examples of controversial matters or controversial episodes are given?
2. (a) Which historians make reference to tensions between TÉ/RTÉ and politicians over television programmes? What causes of tension are identified?
(b) Which of these historians make specific reference to tensions between TÉ/RTÉ and the government over television programmes?
3. Which historian makes reference to the *7 Days* programme and how it frequently incurred the disapproval of the government? Explain what he identifies as the reason for government disapproval.
4. Which historian makes reference to the particular tensions that developed between RTÉ and the government from 1969 following the outbreak of conflict in Northern Ireland? Explain what caused these tensions.
5. In Secondary Source A, the writer says that, “Television is a medium which requires controversy.” Do the views of any of the other historians appear to support this? Explain your answer.
6. In Secondary Source F, the writer says that, “Television was a critical component in the transformation that altered Irish society throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s.” List the points made in any of the other sources A to E that appear to support this view.

Your conclusions on the enquiry



Our enquiry has looked at the reasons why Telefís Éireann/RTÉ was set up in 1961, the impact it had on Irish society between 1962 and 1967, and the further impact it had between 1968 and 1972.

Based on the evidence you have encountered in the course of the enquiry, identify:

- (a) two reasons why Telefís Éireann/RTÉ was set up in 1961
- (b) three ways in which TÉ/RTÉ made a significant impact between 1962 and 1967
- (c) three ways in which RTÉ made a significant impact between 1968 and 1972

Make your case in a written report, devoting one paragraph to each of the factors identified. In a concluding paragraph, give your judgement – based on the evidence you have studied – in relation to the question: *What were the ways in which RTÉ had an impact on Irish society between 1962 and 1972?*

OR

Now that we have looked at a wide range of evidence on the impact of RTÉ between 1962 and 1972:

- Explain what you see as the main reason why the government set up TÉ/RTÉ in 1961.
- What do you think are the TWO most important ways in which TÉ/RTÉ made an impact between 1962 and 1967?
- What do you think are the TWO most important ways in which TÉ/RTÉ made an impact between 1968 and 1972?
- For each of the reasons you give, you must back up your reason with evidence from the primary sources (such as newspaper reports) or secondary sources (such as extracts from the writings of historians) that we have studied.