

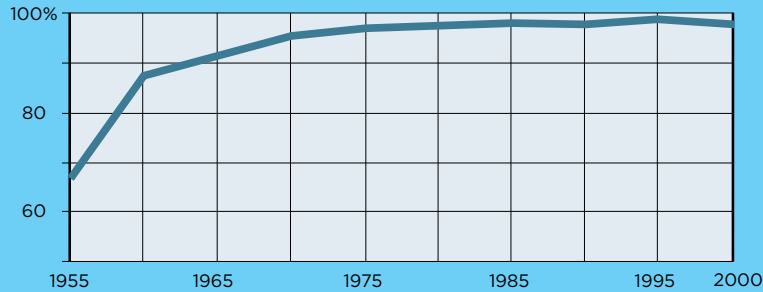
A close-up portrait of Mike Wallace, an older man with dark hair, wearing a suit and tie. The background is a dark, textured blue.

**20<sup>TH</sup>  
CENTURY** WITH MIKE WALLACE  
**POLITICS &  
PRESIDENTS**

A VIEWER'S GUIDE

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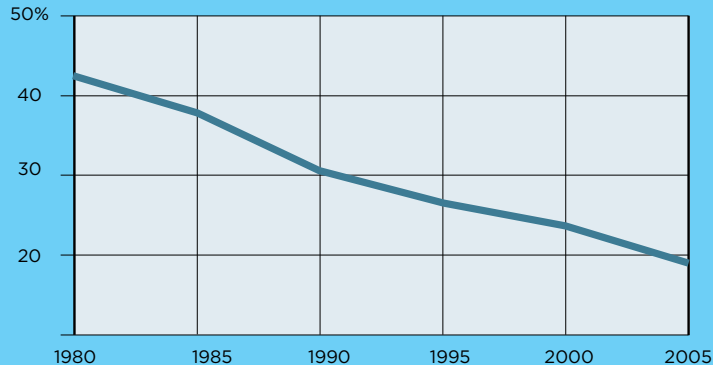
### U.S. Households with Television, 1955-2000



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

### Ratings Share of Major Network (ABC, NBC, CBS) News, 1980-2005

Nielsen rating for Nov. of each year



Source: The State of the News Media 2006: An Annual Report on American Journalism, Journalism.org

### Questions to Consider

1. Jack Anderson notes that, during the late 1940s and early '50s, zealots overturned the traditional principles of American justice in the name of national security. Should national security *ever* trump certain individual rights? Where do you draw the line?
2. How would you evaluate John F. Kennedy's presidency? Would any of his secrets have been impeachable offenses?
3. What lessons can you draw from the 1968 Democratic convention? How have police and protesters changed their tactics in political demonstrations since then?
4. In your opinion, which presented a more serious threat to the nation—the furor over Vietnam that forced President Johnson to drop out of the race, or the crimes that forced President Nixon from office?
5. Based on your perceptions, how have relations between China and the United States changed since President Nixon's visit in 1972? In what respects are they similar?
6. In retrospect, how would you evaluate Ronald Reagan as a president? As the leader of a political movement?
7. After watching and listening to both Republicans and Democrats in President Clinton's Senate trial, do you think his offenses merited removal from office? Why or why not?
8. What role, if any, do you think first ladies should play in advocating public policy? Would your opinion differ for a female president's husband? How so?
9. What portions of a president's private life should the media consider off-limits? Or is everything about a leader's life relevant to his or her character?
10. Do you consider the scrutiny leaders now face to be a necessary check against corruption? Might the "post-Watergate morality" deter otherwise-qualified people from public service?

## BROADCASTING'S BIG MOMENTS

### Experiencing history through television's lens

During the last half of the 20th century, most Americans watched history unfold on their television sets. The medium gave intimacy and immediacy to events by bringing them into viewers' living rooms. It also helped define issues and shape public opinion. Every episode of *20th Century with Mike Wallace* includes film and video clips that crystallized particular moments in history. Some of them, such as Edward R. Murrow's *See It Now* report on Joseph McCarthy, involved meticulous preparation. Others, like President Clinton's famous denial of having "sexual relations with that woman" were complete surprises captured on camera. To the viewing audience, these incidents are indelibly etched in memory, and each new generation is able to witness history as it happened.

Here's the background on a few of the historic broadcast moments shown in this series.

#### FROM EPISODE 1 MURROW VS. McCARTHY

On the night of March 9, 1954, CBS journalist Edward R. Murrow presented a half-hour *See It Now* telecast titled "A Report on Senator Joseph R. McCarthy." The program used the senator's own words and images to expose him as a bully and political opportunist, and became legendary almost the day after it aired.



Edward R. Murrow in  
*The Challenge of Ideas* (1961)

As Mike Wallace emphasizes, Murrow didn't say anything on air that his fellow journalists hadn't already been saying in print for quite some

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time. Newspapers across the country, from the *New York Times* to the *Milwaukee Journal* in McCarthy's home state, had long editorialized against the senator and his tactics. As far back as 1950, widely syndicated columnist Drew Pearson had attacked McCarthy. In September 1951, the *New York Post* ran a 17-part exposé on the senator's demagoguery. The last installment seemed to find the whole business tiresome, comparing McCarthy to "a drunk at a party who was funny half an hour ago but now won't go home."



Senator Joseph McCarthy

Despite a growing swell of criticism in the press, McCarthy received his highest ever Gallup Poll public approval rating—50 percent—in January 1954. This success was short-lived: after the *See It Now* broadcast, McCarthy's approval ratings fell steadily while the number of people viewing him unfavorably grew. A month later, the televised Army-McCarthy hearings dealt an irrecoverable blow to his reputation.

Averaging about 3 million viewers per week, *See It Now* certainly accelerated McCarthy's decline. Murrow's report generated 75,000 phone calls and letters, most of them praising the program; at the time, it was the largest response a television broadcast had ever received. By following his print colleagues' lead (common in TV journalism's infancy) and taking on McCarthy, Murrow demonstrated television's power to show as well as tell.

#### FROM EPISODE 2 THE KENNEDY-NIXON DEBATES

At 8:30 p.m. central time on September 26, 1960, CBS preempted *The Andy Griffith Show*—a top-10 hit at the time—to broadcast the first televised presidential debate between then Senator John F. Kennedy and then Vice President Richard M. Nixon. Moderated by Howard K. Smith and held in

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Chicago, the historic event introduced millions of Americans to JFK's ready-for-prime-time image.

Kennedy had prepped all afternoon for the contest, answering practice questions from his advisors.

He arrived at the studio relaxed and ready. Besides looking tanned (a symptom of his Addison's disease, then unknown to the public), he wore a dark-gray suit to improve on-camera contrast against the studio's light-colored backdrop. At the last minute, he changed into a light-blue shirt to avoid the glare of a white one under the lights.

Nixon, on the other hand, had spent the entire afternoon alone at his hotel, out of touch with his media advisors. He had lost weight after hospitalization for a knee injury and the intense weeks of campaigning that followed, so he looked as frail and exhausted as he felt. The vice president came to the studio in a light-gray suit, which made his figure seem fuzzy on camera compared with JFK's crisp, high-contrast look. Nixon's TV experts had acquired two special spotlights to eliminate the dark circles under his eyes; instead, they made him appear wan and gaunt. Perhaps worst of all, Nixon used a product called Lazy Shave—makeup to conceal the heavy five-o'clock shadow on his pale, almost translucent skin. The stuff wound up streaking and running when he sweated under the hot lights.

In that debate, 70 million viewers saw the contrast between the robust, sharp-dressed Kennedy and the sickly, shrunken-looking Nixon. Most historians agree that the vice president never quite erased that first impression through three subsequent televised debates.



Kennedy-Nixon debate, 1960

### FROM EPISODE 3 RFK AT THE '64 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION

Robert F. Kennedy began running for president—in the public's mind, at least—on August 27, 1964, mere days after he had officially announced his candidacy for New York's U.S. Senate seat. As shown in this episode, that moment came when he introduced a film tribute to his late brother before the assembled delegates at the Democratic Convention in Atlantic City and on live national television to an audience of millions.

Originally slated for earlier in the convention, Kennedy's appearance was postponed until the last night—after delegates had already settled the ticket—out of fear that he would somehow hijack the vice-presidential nomination. Remembering the “spontaneous” demonstrations for Adlai Stevenson at the 1960 convention, President Johnson actually assigned FBI agents to covertly shadow Kennedy and his family.

But when Kennedy finally stepped to the podium to introduce the film, the convention center erupted into applause that lasted a full 22 minutes. In the speech, Kennedy made no overtly political statements, other than urging Democrats to carry on the work of his brother. However, at the suggestion of Jacqueline Kennedy, Robert added a quotation from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* to his final draft, ending with the line, “And pay no worship to the garish sun.” So charged was the political atmosphere within the Democratic Party at the time that some of Johnson's supporters interpreted the inclusion as a veiled reference to the sitting president.

### FROM EPISODE 4 LBJ'S “CRONKITE EPIPHANY”

On February 27, 1968, Walter Cronkite declared that the United States had become “mired in stalemate” in Vietnam. His rare editorial comment

wrapped up a half-hour special, “Report from Vietnam by Walter Cronkite,” broadcast at 10:00 p.m. eastern time that night. As Mike Wallace notes, it was widely reported that President Johnson watched the program and concluded that if he’d lost Walter Cronkite, he’d lost the nation. However, several media analysts—including W. Joseph Campbell of American University—have since called into question the reports of Johnson’s sudden epiphany.



Walter Cronkite

LBJ did not watch Cronkite’s Vietnam report live. At that hour, he was attending a birthday bash for Governor John Connally at the University of Texas gym. There’s also no record of Johnson ever seeing the show on tape. In addition, the president delivered speeches in March defending his Vietnam policy and urging his fellow Americans to stand tough.

In his autobiography, Cronkite himself downplayed the effect of his editorial, describing it as “just one more straw in the increasing burden of Vietnam” for Johnson. Polls show that as early as the summer of 1967, less than half the country supported LBJ’s conduct of the war. The Tet Offensive on January 31, 1968, further disheartened the populace; within six weeks, 20 percent of those who had supported the war pre-Tet reversed their opinions. By June 1968, only 18 percent of Americans harbored hope for U.S. progress in Vietnam.

Rather than a TV-inspired epiphany, Johnson’s eventual decision to suspend bombing and drop out of the presidential race probably came much more slowly, driven mostly by advice from the council of “Wise Men” recounted in this episode.

## FROM EPISODE 5 CRONKITE’S “BIG KISS”

In late October 1972—with the U.S. presidential election little more than a week away—CBS News anchor Walter Cronkite aired a two-part report on the Watergate affair. The 14- and 8-minute-long segments seemed like epics; at the time, most *Evening News* stories ran less than five minutes. In this episode, Bob Woodward of the *Washington Post* calls Cronkite’s reporting “a big kiss” that legitimized and clarified the Watergate story for the American public.

Cronkite admitted that his reports relied heavily on groundwork laid by the *Post* and other newspapers. Thanks to Woodward and his print colleagues, the botched burglary at the Watergate building had led to revelations of far-ranging political espionage and sabotage conducted by Republican operatives during the ’72 campaign. But the newspaper stories had come out in bits and pieces over the summer and fall, without much public impact. Cronkite put the complicated affair together for millions of American viewers and made it visual, using diagrams that connected Watergate burglars to the Committee to Re-Elect the President and the White House. The first report was a cogent overview of the scandal’s history that clearly identified its major players (much to the chagrin of the Nixon team). The second traced the money that financed these covert political activities.

The two Watergate segments earned Cronkite an Emmy Award—one of many over his long career, but the one that he prized the most, the “big doozy,” in his words. As the *Washington Post* editor Ben Bradlee wrote, “The fact that Cronkite did Watergate at all (let alone at that length) gave the story a kind of blessing . . . It was a big deal. You could feel the change overnight.”

## FROM EPISODE 6

### REAGAN'S KNOCKOUT IN NASHUA

On February 23, 1980, still reeling from an unexpected loss to George H.W. Bush in the Iowa caucuses, Ronald Reagan delivered a single line that turned his struggling campaign around. At a debate in a gym in Nashua, New Hampshire, he sat before a live mike and TV cameras and said sternly, “I paid for this microphone, Mr. Green.” Reagan went on to win the primary, the Republican nomination, and the presidency.

The power of Reagan’s pronouncement seems puzzling now. What did he mean, exactly? And why did his line have such an effect in the moment? Originally, the *Nashua Telegraph* wanted to sponsor the debate as a showdown between the two Republican front-runners, Reagan and Bush. But the Federal Election Commission ruled that the newspaper’s sponsorship would constitute an illegal contribution to the Reagan and Bush campaigns unless the event included all Republican candidates on the ballot. After some negotiations, the Reagan campaign decided to foot the entire bill. Reagan invited the other candidates to the event, but no one notified Bush’s people that the debate had been opened up to the entire field.

When four other Republicans—Bob Dole, Howard Baker, John Anderson, and Phil Crane—showed up, a kerfuffle ensued over who would participate. Officials from the *Nashua Telegraph*, still the nominal sponsor, insisted on a two-man format. Reagan took the mike to explain the change of plans. But the newspaper’s editor, Jon Breen, commanded a technician to turn off the sound—prompting Reagan to say, “I paid for this microphone, Mr. Green.”

No matter that Reagan got the editor’s name wrong. His declaration revealed steeliness under his otherwise affable persona. Later, the *Boston Globe* proclaimed, “At a high school in Nashua, the Gipper

grabbed the brass ring.” On the following Tuesday, the voters in New Hampshire agreed.

## FROM EPISODE 7

### CLINTON’S “THAT WOMAN” DENIAL

“I did not have sexual relations with that woman, Miss Lewinsky.” Accompanied by a wagging finger, those 11 words quickly became notorious.

Ironically, Clinton made his dramatic denial in one of the most banal settings imaginable. It came on Monday morning, January 26, 1998. The president—along with Hillary Clinton; Vice President Al Gore; Senators Dianne Feinstein, Barbara Boxer, and Chris Dodd; and other guests—had gathered in the White House to promote an after-school program for kids with working parents. For over a week, websites and tabloids had trumpeted rumors of witnesses, stained dresses, and other evidence proving that the president had committed perjury when he denied an affair with a White House intern under oath. Just the day before, Sunday talk shows had buzzed with speculation over how long Clinton would last in office.

About 50 reporters packed the small space. After introducing the guests, Hillary Clinton acknowledged the elephant in the room by adding, “And I’m especially pleased to see in the audience so many people who care so much about education and child care.”

The president spoke last. After laying out the merits of the after-school program, he seemed to conclude by saying, “Now I have to go back to work on my State of the Union speech, and I worked on it till pretty late last night.” That’s when he paused, looked straight at the cameras, and finally addressed the issue on everyone’s mind.

At first, attention focused on the apparently dismissive phrase “that woman.” Later, the president would say he had forgotten her name in the emotion of the moment. In the end, his 11-word denial left his defenders and critics alike parsing sentences and searching for meaning.

## FROM EPISODE 8

### JACKIE KENNEDY’S TELEVISED TOUR

Jacqueline Kennedy completely captivated America on Wednesday, February 14, 1962, with the television special, “A Tour of the White House with Mrs. John F. Kennedy.” For an hour, she presented not only her ongoing restoration of the presidential residence, but also a carefully crafted image of herself as first lady—one that would last in the public mind through the national trauma of JFK’s assassination and beyond.

Directed by Franklin J. Schaffner (an emerging talent who would eventually win an Oscar for *Patton*), the show took months of negotiations, a full day to film, and more than \$255,000 to produce. Although CBS News created the program, costs were split between the three major networks in exchange for the right to broadcast the tape. While the family retreated to their Virginia vacation home for the weekend, crews trucked in nine tons of lights, cameras, and sound equipment. Producer Perry Wolff prepared a script in consultation with the restoration project’s staff, and Mrs. Kennedy chose which features to highlight. Wolff later stated that Jackie “absolutely knew her stuff. She was amazing.” Despite her expertise, the First Lady nervously chain-smoked between takes.



Jacqueline Kennedy in Ft. Worth, TX, November 22, 1963, before the assassination of President Kennedy

Compared with today’s polished TV personalities, Jackie seems shy and moves robotically on camera, as the clip in this series shows. But it was her voice that made the biggest impression—sweet, whispery, and girlish. In an article for *Esquire* magazine, Norman Mailer excoriated its timbre, calling it “manufactured,” “smarmy singsong,” and better suited to a weather girl. Although other publications positively raved about the TV special, Jackie had little confidence in her public speaking skills and remained famously press shy for the rest of her life.

Nearly 50 million people watched the televised White House tour. Later rebroadcast on other networks and syndicated in 50 countries worldwide, it became the most-viewed documentary of its time.

## FROM EPISODE 9

### THE CLINTONS ON 60 MINUTES

On Super Bowl Sunday, January 26, 1992, about 120 million people had finished watching the Washington Redskins beat the Buffalo Bills when CBS aired a special edition of *60 Minutes* featuring Steve Kroft’s interview with Bill and Hillary Clinton. Three days earlier, Gennifer Flowers had made headlines by alleging a longtime affair with the Arkansas governor, a revelation that threatened Clinton’s candidacy in the upcoming New Hampshire primary. Together, Bill and Hillary talked about their marriage to a huge post-game TV audience.

The Clintons and their campaign team had decided on a strategy for the interview: assert the strength of their marriage and make any denials or admissions in only the vaguest terms. Above all, never under any circumstances utter “the A-word”—adultery. In polls at the time, a quarter of voters said they would not vote for any candidate who had engaged in an extramarital affair, while 40 percent considered adultery a serious factor in evaluating a candidate.

The hour-long interview took place in a Boston hotel suite and was later edited to a 10-minute, on-air segment. Bill famously admitted to “causing pain in [his] marriage.” Pressed on- and off-camera about his relationship with Flowers, he maintained his tactic of ambiguous denial, supported by Hillary. Near the end, when Kroft referred to the Clintons’ marriage as an “arrangement,” it was Bill’s turn to jump in. “Wait a minute,” he said. “You’re looking at two people who love each other . . . This is a *marriage*.” (“I wanted to slug him,” Bill later wrote in his memoir.)

That night, 34 million people watched *60 Minutes*. By the next day, 50 million more had seen taped highlights. According to one poll, 76 percent of voters said Flowers’s allegations would not affect their votes. Clinton stayed in the race, finishing a strong second in the primary and dubbing himself “the Comeback Kid.”

#### FROM EPISODE 10

#### GARY HART’S HANOVER MELTDOWN

On May 6, 1987, at a packed press conference in Hanover, New Hampshire, a reporter from the *Washington Post* asked Senator Gary Hart, “Have you ever committed adultery?” It marked the first time in the television age that anyone had asked such a question to a person seeking national political office. Hart hemmed and hawed before finally responding, “I do not think that’s a fair question.”

Fair or not, that particular press conference set new standards for modern American political discourse. For months, rumors had swirled about Hart, a leading contender for the Democratic nomination, and his purported extramarital affairs. He had even dared the press to follow him around. But on May 3, 1987, the *Miami Herald* ran a story linking Hart



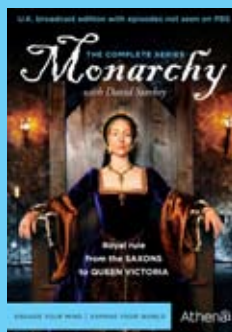
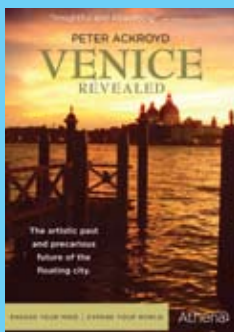
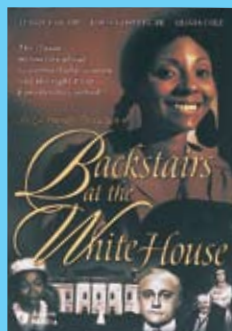
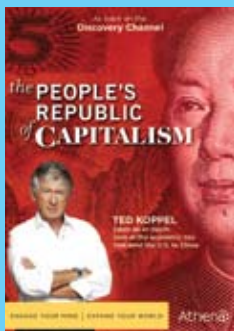
Gary Hart

to Donna Rice, an unmarried pharmaceutical salesperson and sometime model. Hart immediately denied having a sexual relationship with her. In fact, he gave a speech before the American Newspaper Publishers Association in which he touted his own character and morals.

When he faced the press at Dartmouth College, however, Hart equivocated. Jumping on his comments about morality to the newspaper publishers the day before, reporters grilled him on whether he thought adultery was immoral. Hart said he did. When asked again whether he had ever committed adultery, he said, “I do not know. I’m not going to get into a theological definition of what constitutes adultery.” One reporter even asked whether Hart would take a polygraph test. “Gimme a break,” he answered.

Two days later, Hart withdrew from the race, portraying himself as the victim of an unfair media inquisition. He reentered the race seven months later, but his best showing in 19 primaries was a meager 5.9 percent of the vote, effectively ending his candidacy.

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