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TV Heaven Plus: Quiz Shows

Introduction to TV Heaven

The first viewing facility of its kind in Britain, TV Heaven invites National Media Museum visitors to select and watch any of the classic television programmes in the TV Heaven collection completely free of charge. Open to the public since June 1993, the TV Heaven archive has grown to include over 900 programmes, encompassing the last 60 years of television broadcasting history. These include classic comedies, childhood favourites, soaps, hard-hitting documentaries, memorable plays and dramas, and much more.

TV Heaven Plus Showreels and Teacher's Packs

The aim of the TV Heaven Plus packs is to provide Media teachers and students with contextual information and a wide range of illustrative extracts from non-contemporary television programmes to aid their exploration of specific television genres.

TV Heaven Plus packs have two parts;

- 1.) A DVD of extracts available to view in the TV Heaven Viewing Room. The *TV Heaven Plus: Quiz Shows* DVD includes extracts from 11 different British quiz shows spanning over 50 years of television history.
- 2.) This accompanying teacher's pack, detailing the conventions of the Quiz Show, the historical and social context of each featured programme, and a series of student worksheets to take away or complete on-site.

Both the DVD extracts and the supporting information are arranged chronologically by date.

TV Heaven Plus visits are designed to be teacher-led, offering groups the independence and flexibility to tailor their visit to their own specific needs. The TV Heaven Plus DVD has the option to both 'play all' extracts, or alternatively you may select desired chapters.

The TV Heaven collection includes a large number of British quiz shows and these form the basis of this TV Heaven Plus pack. Occasional reference is made to quiz shows from other countries in terms of their relationship to the British model.

Should a member of your group wish to return to TV Heaven to watch any programme in full, they are welcome to do so. Visitors can call in to TV Heaven at any time, and our viewing spaces can be booked in advance by calling the TV Heaven desk directly on (01274) 203433.

At the end of a pack you will find an evaluation sheet. We would appreciate it if your group leader could complete this and hand it in at the TV Heaven desk before you leave.

Introduction to Quiz Shows

A quiz show is a programme (on television or radio) where contestants demonstrate knowledge by answering questions. Programmes have a competitive element.

Quiz Show Conventions

Studio and set design are used to create the desired atmosphere for a quiz show. Typical elements include a podium behind which the contestants stand and dramatic lighting (such as spotlights and coloured lighting) to heighten tension or create a dynamic, glamorous feel.

Music is also used to create the right tone for a quiz show. It can be used as a catchy theme tune, as mood music to increase tension, or to signal different parts of the show. The music a quiz show uses reveals a great deal about its intentions, for example, *Mastermind's* (BBC, 1972-97, 2003-) 'Approaching Menace' theme is an intimidating score that expresses the tension and isolation contestants face.

Hosts and assistants are a key factor in the success of a quiz show. Quite often the host is a recognisable face from television, but often from a different genre, such as comedy or news. The host must have a strong presence and be able to fill in when the contestants are nervous or do something unexpected, which is why many successful quiz show hosts are comedians, such as Bob Monkhouse or Les Dawson. Traditionally, the host is male and accompanied by a "glamorous female assistant", although this relationship has changed in recent years. For example, Carol Vorderman's partnership with *Countdown* (Channel 4, 1982-) host Richard Whiteley became much more equal over the years and an important part of the programme's success.

Catchphrases from television quiz shows have become a crucial part of the genre and have crossed over into popular culture. Catchphrases such as "you are the weakest link, goodbye", "can I phone a friend?" and "I've started so I'll finish" have quickly passed into public knowledge, and many people recognise them even if they never watched the programme itself.

Contestants are chosen from the thousands who apply to appear on the show, or even from the studio audience, and they vary in age, gender and social background. The way in which contestants are selected for a quiz show depends on the style of the programme; for example if the focus of the show is to be entertaining rather than a 'serious' quiz, contestants may have to go through an audition process to see if they will be entertaining on camera. Because it is usually viewers of the programme who apply to appear as contestants, the people who appear on quiz shows tend to reflect the type of audience the show attracts.

Questions vary depending on the target audience, but are usually set independently to ensure that they are fair. Contestants usually know what kind of questions they will be expected to answer, for example whether they will be general knowledge questions or questions based on a specialist subject that they can prepare for (as in *Mastermind*). They can be multiple choice or straight question and answer. Questions often start easy, to put the contestants at their ease, and get progressively harder. There are also many examples of quiz shows that are focused on a particular theme, such as sports, news or music; for example *A Question of Sport* (BBC, 1979-), *Have I Got News for You* (BBC, 1990-), and *Never Mind the Buzzcocks* (BBC, 1996-).

Prizes are varied, ranging from cash prizes, cars and holidays, through to tokens of achievement, such as a Crackerjack pencil or a Blankety Blank Chequebook and Pen. Usually even the losers go away with a consolation prize.

Quiz Show Institutions

Finance

Television quiz shows are relatively cheap to make in comparison to other types of programming, such as dramas. This is especially true if the shows are sponsored or if they are linked with telephone call lines, both of which generate income for the show.

Broadcasters

Different broadcasters tend to make different types of quiz shows to meet their audience's needs. The BBC has a tradition of making quiz shows that are quite prestigious, but not particularly glamorous. The BBC often aims for a middle class audience where more academic knowledge is valued and their quiz shows are rarely intended as audience-grabbing prime time programmes. BBC Two tends to be used as a platform for comedy quiz shows, in which the focus is on the entertainment provided by celebrity panelists and comedians, rather than on who wins or loses, for example *QI* (BBC, 2003-), *Have I Got News for You* (BBC, 1990-), and *Never Mind the Buzzcocks* (BBC, 1996-).

For ITV, quiz shows have been a popular and successful prime time format for many years with shows like *Double Your Money* (1955-1968), *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?* (1998-), *Family Fortunes* (1979-2006) and *Bullseye* (1981-1995, 2006-) attracting very large audiences. In 2005, *Ant & Dec's Gameshow Marathon* (ITV) – a series of new, one-off episodes of classic ITV quiz shows - was broadcast as part of ITV's 50th anniversary celebrations. This illustrates the importance of the genre in ITV's development.

Channel 4 was quick to recognise the value of tailoring quiz shows to particular audiences and scheduling them at a time when those audiences would be likely to watch. For example, daytime quiz shows such as *Countdown* (Channel 4, 1982-) are popular with an older, retired demographic and students.

In the early days of television, many quiz shows were adapted from existing radio quizzes. This had the advantage of providing television producers with tried and tested formats that already had a good audience. Examples include *Double Your Money* (ITV, 1955-1968) and *Take Your Pick* (ITV, 1955-1968), both of which originated on Radio Luxembourg and were bought by ITV for the channel's launch in 1955.

Prizes

The BBC must abide by a strict code of conduct when it comes to quiz show prizes. Because the BBC is a publically funded body, they can not profit from the programmes they broadcast or advertise a particular product. ITV, however, is a commercial broadcaster, and encourages sponsorship of quizzes; for example, BMW might donate a car as a quiz show prize in exchange for the publicity of having their product appear on television. Telephone entries have also helped finance quiz show prizes; the phone companies donate a percentage of the cost of every phone call made to the show's production company in exchange for all the extra business generated.

Following the launch of Britain's first prize-winning quiz show, *Double Your Money*, in 1955, ITV enjoyed huge success with their game shows. By 1956, the Independent Television Authority (who regulated the network), were complaining that, "There is on the whole rather more giving away of money and prizes in programmes than is altogether good for the reputation of the programme companies, the Authority and Independent Television generally." As a result the ITA placed limits on the value of ITV quiz show prizes - limits that were not lifted until the 1990s.

Like any television programme, quiz shows can be affected by changes in the fortunes of broadcasting companies. When Associated-Rediffusion lost its ITV franchise in 1968, two of the channel's most popular quiz shows, *Double Your Money* (ITV, 1955-1968) and *Take Your Pick* (ITV, 1955-1968) were cancelled. There are also examples of quiz shows being re-launched on different channels; *University Challenge* (ITV, 1962-1987 / BBC, 1994-) was originally licensed and produced by Granada Television and was first shown on ITV from 1962 until its cancellation (due to low viewing figures) in 1987. Seven years later the programme was re-launched on BBC Two, where it found a more appreciative audience.

Spin offs

It is now common for quiz shows to produce themed or celebrity versions of popular formats, either as one off 'specials' or for charity purposes. This of course helps increase the popularity and longevity of the show. DVDs and board games have also extended the life of quiz shows, allowing people to play at home whenever they like.

Syndication

Popular quiz formats are often syndicated, that is sold to many different television companies. For example, versions of *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?* (ITV, 1998-) have been aired in over 100 countries worldwide, many with their own hosts and in their own language. Selling the format in this way generates a great deal of money for the production company that owns the rights to the programme.

Quiz Show Audiences

There are generally two different quiz show 'audiences'; there is usually a studio audience who are encouraged to participate by cheering, voting or merely applauding and there is the audience watching the programme on television at home. The home viewing audience is rarely passive; they are encouraged to 'play along at home' by answering the questions themselves or perhaps cheering on a particular person or team. In the case of some recent quiz shows (for example *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?* (Carlton, 2000) and *Countdown* (YTV, 1996)), on-screen graphics are used to display the questions to the home viewing audience, and sometimes viewers are encouraged to participate directly, either through interactive buttons on their remote controls or via their computer. Therefore, quiz shows are one of the more 'interactive' television genres.

The type of audience a quiz show attracts depends on many things, including the channel the programme is broadcast on, the time of day it is shown and the type of questions that are asked. It is possible to see that the target audiences of quiz shows can be very different. For example, the BBC quiz show *Mastermind* is seen to be quite a middle class, intellectual quiz show and so it became headline news when Fred Housego, a London taxi driver, won the final in 1980. This reveals a lot about people's understanding of who watches different quiz shows.

Quiz Show Representations

There are different values at work in quiz shows. The amount of money spent on a quiz show can be seen in the production values, in the quality and innovation of the studio set and the kind of prizes offered.

The difficulty and type of questions asked, the relationship between the host and the contestants, and the attitude of the host in general reveal a lot about a programme's values and intentions. For example, Les Dawson, the second host of *Blankety Blank* (BBC, 1979-1990, 1997-1999 / ITV, 2001, 2007), was known for mocking the poor standard of the prizes the programme offered, but this created a great deal of humour and entertainment that helped to make the show popular with audiences.

Also, it isn't always the cleverest who wins a quiz show; sometimes strategy plays a part, as can be seen in shows such as *The Weakest Link* (BBC, 2000-). This creates the idea that 'everyone can be a winner', encouraging audiences to pit their wits against the 'experts' and thus increase the popularity and longevity of the show.

Because quiz shows feature relatively spontaneous or unplanned interactions between real people, it is a genre that easily reflects the social attitudes of the time they were made. For example, in the extracts included on the accompanying DVD, there are some interesting comments about the perceived role of women in the 1950s and 60s.

Key Questions

The purpose of quiz shows is to entertain audiences (at home and in the studio) by encouraging them to participate in answering questions themselves, support the contestants, or simply to laugh along with the banter provided by the host, contestants and sometimes celebrity panellists.

You might like to explore with your group;

- In what way are quiz shows an interactive genre?
- How have quiz shows changed over time and why?

Also, while viewing each of the following extracts, it will be useful to keep in mind;

- What quiz show **conventions** can be identified?
- How are different social groups **represented**?
- What sort of **audience** does the quiz show seem to be aimed at?
- What **institutional** issues are relevant?

TV Heaven Plus: Quiz Shows

DVD Chapters

1. *Take Your Pick* (ATV, 1955)
2. *Crackerjack* (BBC, 1958)
3. *University Challenge* (Granada, 1962)
4. *Double Your Money* (ATV, 1966)
5. *Blankety Blank* (BBC, 1979)
6. *Family Fortunes* (ATV, 1980)
7. *Bullseye* (Central, 1982)
8. *Mastermind* (BBC, 1989)
9. *Have I Got News for You* (BBC, 1990)
10. *Countdown* (YTV, 1996)
11. *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?* (Carlton, 2000)

Chapter 1. *Take Your Pick* (ATV, 1955)

Extract Duration: 3 minutes

Writer(s): Darin Morgan

Director: Kim Manners

Cast: Michael Miles (host)

Programme context:

Take Your Pick (ITV, 1955-1968) was a UK game show devised by Michael Miles (who also hosted the programme) and originally broadcast by Radio Luxembourg in the early 1950s. The show transferred to television in 1955 with the launch of ITV, where it continued until 1968.



Take Your Pick was ITV's first Friday night game show and the first British quiz show to give away a cash prize. It was hugely popular, attracting 78% of the audience share in the London area alone. One 1959 episode became the second highest rated programme of the decade, attracting 13.15 million viewers, beaten only by a 1959 episode of the American western series *Wagon Train* (1957-1965) which attracted 13.62 million viewers.

Along with Hughie Green's *Double Your Money* (ITV, 1955-1968), *Take Your Pick* was one of the most successful quiz shows of the era, and like *Double Your Money* it was only cancelled in 1968 because the company responsible for producing it, Rediffusion London (previously Associated-Rediffusion), lost their ITV franchise and went out of business. In 1992, the show was revived by Thames Television with Des O'Connor as the host. This version was broadcast until 1998. *Take Your Pick*'s format was revived again for one night only in 2005 as part of *Ant & Dec's Gameshow Marathon* (ITV, 2005), a series that presented new one-off episodes of classic ITV gameshows as part of the channel's 50th anniversary celebrations.

The format of *Take Your Pick* consisted of several different rounds. First, there was a qualification round in which the contestants had to correctly answer a general knowledge question or, failing that, complete a forfeit. This was followed by the 'Yes-No Interlude', another qualification game lasting up to 60 seconds in which the contestants had to respond to interview questions without saying "yes" or "no", or nodding or shaking their head. Successful contestants were then brought on one at a time and asked three simple general knowledge questions. If they answered correctly, they could pick one of ten keys, each of which would open a corresponding numbered box. The host would then try to buy back the key with increasing amounts of money until the contestant either accepted the money or the host refused to offer any more, at which point the contestant would open the box. The boxes could contain any of the following; three booby prizes, such as a baby's teething ring or a house plant; a key to a treasure chest of money; desirable prizes, such as furniture or a sewing machine; and the star prize. There was also 'Box 13' which contained a clue to a mystery prize, which could be anything from another booby prize to a holiday. The key for this box was only available to contestants who were willing to 'gamble' the prize they had already won.

While watching the extract:

- How would you describe the contestants and their relationship with host Michael Miles?
- Why do you think the viewing audience is shown shots of the studio audience?

Chapter 2. *Crackerjack* (BBC, 1958)

Extract Duration: 3 minutes

Writer(s): David Whittaker, Ronnie Corbett and Michael Darbyshire

Director: Johnny Downes

Cast: Eamonn Andrews (host)



Programme context:

Crackerjack (BBC, 1955-1984) was a children's comedy and variety programme created by BBC producer John Downes. It ran from 1955 to 1984, first in black and white and later in colour. During its 29 years on television, *Crackerjack* featured a variety of presenters, including Eamonn Andrews, Max Bygraves, Leslie Crowther, Ed "Stewpot" Stewart, Stu Francis, Peter Glaze, Don Maclean, Michael Aspel, Jacqueline Clarke, Jan Hunt, The Krankies, Bernie Clifton, Rod McLennan and Ronnie Corbett. Many of these presenters were either well known television faces already, or became so because of *Crackerjack*.

Each show was filmed live in front of an audience of mainly children at the BBC Television Theatre. The format of the programme included competitive games for teams of children, a music spot, a comedy double act, and a finale in which the cast performed a short comic play. It was an unwritten rule that whenever a presenter said the word "Crackerjack", the audience would shout "Crack-er-jack!" loudly - a custom that has since passed into popular culture.

One of the most memorable games on *Crackerjack* was a quiz called 'Double or Drop', in which each contestant was given a prize for every general knowledge question they answered correctly, but given a cabbage for every one they answered incorrectly. They were out of the game if they dropped any of the items they were given or received a third cabbage. Eamonn Andrews originally hosted 'Double or Drop' as a touring show for adults in Ireland before adapting it for children. In the original version, prize money doubled at each question up to a maximum of one pound, hence the name.

A standard consolation prize for children who appeared on *Crackerjack* was the Crackerjack Pencil or, in later years, a Crackerjack pen. These were kept in a special locked cabinet at the BBC and only given to children who actually took part in the games. Nobody else - even the presenters and crew - was allowed to have one! One exception was made in 1961 when the Queen visited the set and was given pencils for Prince Charles and Princess Anne. Crackerjack pencils are now very hard to find.

By the 1980s, television techniques had advanced so far that the live theatre look of the original *Crackerjack* looked crude and slow. In 1982 viewing figures had begun to fall and in an attempt to win back its audience *Crackerjack* introduced new games like 'Take a Chance' in which celebrity guests could score extra points for their young teammates. Failure to answer questions correctly led to Stu Francis and/or the celebrity guest being covered in gunge. However, these gimmicks did little to slow the falling ratings and the show was cancelled in 1984 while the BBC concentrated on formats more suited to modern children's television.

While watching the extract:

- How does *Crackerjack* appeal to its young target audience? Think particularly about the types of questions being asked, the prizes on offer, the studio audience and any 'interactive' elements.
- Do you think that children today would still enjoy *Crackerjack*?
- What comments can you hear that reveal something about social attitudes of the 1950s?

Chapter 3. *University Challenge* (Granada, 1962)

Extract Duration: 3 minutes, 45 seconds

Producer: Peter Plummer

Cast: Bamber Gascoigne (host)

Programme context:

University Challenge (ITV, 1962-1987 / BBC, 1994-) is generally considered to be one of the most intelligent British television quiz shows; asking difficult questions on subjects as varied as mathematics, science, engineering, literature, music, philosophy and poetry. The format is based on the American show *College Bowl*, which ran on NBC radio from 1953 to 1957, and on NBC television from 1959 to 1970.



Each episode sees two teams of four students from the same university compete in a question-and-answer quiz, with the winning team progressing to the next round of the tournament. "Starter" questions are answered individually without conferring and are worth 10 points, giving the programme its most famous catchphrase "your starter for 10...". The team that answers the starter question correctly gets to answer a set of three "bonus" questions worth 5 points each. The pace of questioning gradually increases throughout the show, becoming almost frantic in the last minute or so before the "gong" which signals the end of the game. The team that generates the most points in the series is named the overall winner. They do not win a cash prize or a holiday, but a modest trophy and the satisfaction of being a winner on television's toughest quiz show.

Licensed and produced by Granada Television, *University Challenge* was originally hosted by Bamber Gascoigne and broadcast by ITV between 1962 and 1987. However, by the mid-1980s audience ratings were falling and attempts to change the format made little difference. *University Challenge* was taken off the air in 1987 when ratings fell to 1 million. According to Granada, elitism was the key problem; a 1986 survey found that a large number of viewers saw it as snobbish, with too-hard questions and teams dominated by Oxford and Cambridge students. *University Challenge* was eventually revived in 1994 on the BBC, with Jeremy Paxman as the host. The programme retained the same format, but made a few minor changes; Paxman's curt and sometime off-hand delivery breathed new life into the programme and it began to widen its appeal by inviting a wider range of universities to take part. Following its move to the BBC, *University Challenge* began to attract some very respectable ratings for an evening quiz show and at its peak it has been watched by around 12 million people.

Even tried and tested programmes feel the need to modernise and in 2000 *University Challenge* was given a new set and new music (although the format remained the same) in order to keep it looking fresh. Perhaps one of the most recognisable elements of *University Challenge*'s design is the use of a split-screen effect to show the two teams on screen one above the other, something that has remained unchanged since the programme began and has become a recognisable part of popular culture.

As with many successful quiz shows, the *University Challenge* format has provided the basis for several spin offs. In 2002, to mark the programme's 40th anniversary, former winners and notable teams were invited to appear on the nostalgic *University Challenge Reunited* (BBC, 2002), and since 2003 there have been several series of *University Challenge: The Professionals* (BBC, 2003-), featuring teams from the worlds of journalism, politics, broadcasting, public service and so on.

While watching the extract:

- What do you think the questions reveal about *University Challenge*'s target audience and why do you think the move from ITV to the BBC may have helped attract more viewers?
- Compare this extract to the *Take Your Pick* extract. How does it differ in its presentation and tone?

Chapter 5. *Blankety Blank* (BBC, 1979)

Extract Duration: 3 minutes, 45 seconds

Director: Marcus Plantin

Cast: Terry Wogan (host), Peter Jones, Faith Brown, Judy Cornwell, Bobby Knutt, Windsor Davies, June Whitfield



Programme context:

Blankety Blank (BBC, 1979-1990, 1997-1999 / ITV, 2001, 2007)

is an excellent example of how quiz show formats can travel the world. The British version was based on the Australian programme *Blankety Blanks* (1977-1978) which was in turn based on the American game show *Match Game* (1962–1991). The British version ran from 1979 to 1990 on the BBC and was hosted first by Terry Wogan and then by comedian Les Dawson. In the late 1990s a revived version fronted by Lily Savage (a comic character played by Paul O'Grady) ran for two more years on the BBC, before moving to ITV for a further year in 2001.

There were three parts to the show's format; the preliminary game, the 'Supermatch' which followed, and the final round. In the preliminary round, two contestants competed against one another to 'fill-in-the-blanks' in statements read out by the host. Frequently, the statements were written with a rude double-meaning in mind and the aim was for the contestants to match their answers to as many of the answers given by six celebrity panelists as possible. The winner of the main game would then go through to the 'Supermatch' game in which another fill-in-the-blank phrase was given. This time it was up to the contestant to choose the most common response based on a studio audience survey; the most popular answer in the survey was worth 150 'Blanks', the second-most popular 100 'Blanks', and the third most popular '50'. The whole game was then repeated with a second pair of contestants, and the contestant who achieved the highest Supermatch game score went through to the final, in which they would have to match their "blank" answer to a chosen celebrity's to win a star prize.

The focus of *Blankety Blank* was on the comic banter between the host and the celebrity panelists. Regular members of the celebrity panel included comedians and presenters such as Kenny Everett, Lorraine Chase, Gareth Hunt, Gary Davies and Cheryl Baker. The programme made a running joke out of the poor quality of prizes on offer, particularly once Les Dawson had taken over as host. Perhaps most famous was the consolation prize, the 'Blankety Blank chequebook and pen', a fairly cheap-looking silver trophy in the shape of a chequebook. Both Wogan's witty patter and Dawson's world-weary humour were ideally suited to the style of *Blankety Blank*. Their mockery of the show's prizes and banter with contestants and panelist alike provided great entertainment and created a rapport between the contestants, panelist and audiences at home and in the studio.

Blankety Blank is remembered affectionately by audiences. In 2006 the show was revived as an interactive DVD game, and a one-off edition of *Blankety Blank* was shown as part of the 2007 series *Gameshow Marathon* (ITV, 2005-2007) hosted by Vernon Kay.

While watching the extract:

- What purpose do you think the celebrity panellists serve? Would you say the focus of the programme is on who wins, the humour or a balance of both?
- Consider the use of set design, music and prizes and how they contribute to the overall tone of the show.

Chapter 6. *Family Fortunes* (ATV, 1980)

Extract Duration: 3 minutes

Writer(s): Kim Manners

Director: Darin Morgan

Cast: Bob Monkhouse (host)

Programme context:

Family Fortunes (ITV, 1979-2006) was one of the highest rated and longest running British television quiz shows ever made. It was based on the American game show *Family Feud* (1976-), but British producers changed the name of the show to *Family Fortunes* because they thought the word "feud" was too confrontational for UK audiences!

Two family teams competed to guess what "100 people surveyed" had said in response to a given question (for example "name something that hops"), earning more points (and therefore more money) by guessing the most popular answers. Correct answers would appear on a huge electronic board, along with the number of people who had given that response. Every time a team member gave an answer that was not on the board the family would receive a "strike"; a large X on the board accompanied by the infamous "uh-uhh" sound. The family which totaled the most money during the game would then have the chance to play in the final, 'Big Money.' In this against the clock round, one family member gave their answers to five surveyed questions, trying to guess the most popular response each time. Then a second family member (who had been kept in isolation) would answer the same five questions without duplicating any of the previous answers. If they got 200 points or more from the ten combined answers the family would win the top cash prize.

Family Fortunes originally ran from 1979 until 2002 and was first hosted by Bob Monkhouse (1980-1983) and then from 1983 to 1985 by Max Bygraves, who received some criticism for his hosting of the show. After being "rested" for the whole of 1986, *Family Fortunes* returned with Les Dennis as host in June 1987, and had a consistently successful run for the next fifteen years. In 2002 the show was moved out of its peak time evening slot and became a daily daytime show, hosted by Andy Collins, but it only had a short run in this format before being cancelled. The format was revived in October 2005 as the "grand final" of *Ant & Dec's Gameshow Marathon*. Subsequently, *Family Fortunes* returned for a full series in 2006, 2007 and 2008 with Vernon Kay as its host. Renamed *All Star Family Fortunes*, the revived format featured celebrities and their families playing for a charity of their choice.

Although the programme has always been broadcast by ITV, it has been made by many different production companies; it was originally produced by ATV, then by Central and finally by Carlton, who bought Central in 1994. The 2006 revival was produced by Talkback Thames. The *Family Fortunes* theme tune was composed by Mike Alexander, and although the style has changed over the years, the same tune has been used since the programme began. The set is dominated by the huge answers board, "Mr. Babbage", which is named after Charles Babbage, the inventor of the first programmable computer. However, *All Star Family Fortunes* replaced the classic yellow LED scoreboard with a multicolour video wall. Like many quiz shows, *Family Fortunes* uses a darkened studio and spot lights during the final round to increase tension and drama.

Very few quiz shows have remained a fixture of peak-time television schedules for two decades without long periods off air. Because of its exceptional longevity, *Family Fortunes* has become a well known part of British popular culture. The "uh-uhh" sound heard whenever contestants gave an answer that was not given by the "100 people surveyed" is instantly recognizable, and the programme became famous for the frequently ridiculous answers given by contestants, for example, when one woman was asked to "name something blue" she gave the answer "my cardigan!"

While watching the extract:

- Bob Monkhouse was a famous comedian as well as a game show host. How does this come across during the extract and what purpose does his humour serve?



Chapter 7. *Bullseye* (Central, 1982)

Extract Duration: 4 minutes

Writer(s): Andrew Wood

Director: Peter Harris

Cast: Jim Bowen (host)

Programme context:

Bullseye (ITV, 1981-1995, 2006-) was a British quiz show with a darts theme, devised by Andrew Wood and Norman Vaughan and hosted by former club comedian Jim Bowen. The first series (1981) was shown on Monday nights, and the last two series (1994 and 1995) on Saturday evenings, but it was between 1982 and 1993 in a Sunday evening slot that *Bullseye* hit its peak audience, attracting an average of 15 million viewers. At this point *Bullseye* stopped being just a game-show and became an institution, with Jim's catchphrases such as "super, smashing, great" becoming instantly recognizable with audiences. After an eleven-year break, *Bullseye* was revived for satellite channel Challenge in 2006, hosted by comedian Dave Spikey.



Three pairs of contestants (an amateur dart player and a non-dart player) would compete in three rounds, each based on general knowledge questions and darts playing. The pair with the highest total winnings from the first two rounds went through to the final and the losing pairs went home with a set of darts, a tankard (or silver goblet for female contestants) a 'Bendy Bully' mascot and the money that they had won from the previous two rounds. The final pair of contestants was faced with 'Bully's Prize Board'; throwing a total of nine darts the pair won a prize for each red segment they hit, however, if they hit the same red segment twice the prize was lost, hence Jim's slightly odd catchphrase "Keep out of the black, and in the red; there's nothing in this game for two in a bed!" Having completed Bully's Prize Board, the winning pair was presented with the option to gamble their winnings for the mystery star prize hidden behind a screen in the studio. If they did gamble, they had six darts to score 101 or more on a standard dartboard, but contestants who failed to reach 101 lost their prizes and were invited to "have a look what you would have won", by Jim.

The *Bullseye* prize board became the subject of many jokes because of the inconsistent quality of prizes on offer. This was partly because ITV quiz shows had to restrict the value of their prizes to some degree in line with Independent Broadcasting Authority regulations. The star prize was usually a holiday (especially in later series), a car, a caravan or a speedboat, but sometimes less lavish star prizes (such as fitted kitchens) were given away so as to stay within the IBA's prize limits.

The show was unique in having two different closing theme tunes; an upbeat tune played when the contestants won the star prize, and a tune in a minor key when they lost or nobody gambled. In recent years, *Bullseye* has gained nostalgic affection and its popularity has risen. *Bullseye* was one of several quiz shows released as an interactive DVD game for Christmas 2005 (featuring the voice of Jim Bowen and footage from the original show) and a board game was made around the same time.

While watching the extract:

- Do you think *Bullseye*'s Sunday evening timeslot had an effect on its popularity? What kind of an audience would be watching at this time?
- Can you identify the conventions of the quiz show genre that have been adapted to suit the darts theme?

Chapter 8. *Mastermind* (BBC, 1989)

Extract Duration: 3 minutes, 10 seconds

Writer(s): John Simpson, Geoffrey Hindley and Alan Palmer

Director: Andrea Conway

Cast: Magnús Magnússon (host)

Programme context:

Mastermind (BBC, 1972-97, 2003-) is a BBC quiz show well-known for its challenging questions and intimidating setting. The first episode was aired on Monday 11 September 1972 and was billed by the Radio Times as a "new and exciting brain game". *Mastermind* was originally broadcast late on Sunday nights and was not expected to receive a large audience, but it was moved to a prime-time slot in 1973 as an emergency replacement for a Leslie Phillips sitcom, *Casanova '73* (BBC), which had received complaints about its risqué content. Thanks in part to its new time slot *Mastermind* became one of the most-watched shows on British television. The quiz was hosted between 1972 and 1997 by Magnús Magnússon, an Icelandic television presenter, journalist, translator and writer, and was revived in 2003 with news reporter John Humphrys as host.

Devised by Bill Wright, the basic format of *Mastermind* has never changed; four contestants face two rounds, one on a specialist subject of the contestant's choice, the other a general knowledge round. Each contestant has two minutes per round, and they are allowed to pass on any questions they can not answer. At the end of each round a buzzer is sounded, but if a question is still being read out the famous *Mastermind* catchphrase, "I've started so I'll finish", is uttered, allowing the contestant a moment to come up with an answer. Indeed, Magnusson's famous catchphrase is considered such an iconic part of the programme that John Humphrys adopted it when he began hosting *Mastermind* in 2003. The winner is the contestant with the most points at the end of the episode, but if two or more contestants draw, then the contestant with the fewer passes becomes the winner. This leads to tactical playing: passing wastes less time than struggling to think of an answer, but may count against the contestant in the event of a tie. The episode winner goes through to the next round and the winner of the series final is declared "Mastermind" for that year and is the only contestant to receive a prize; a cut glass engraved bowl.

Perhaps the most famous element of the show is the black leather chair in which the contestants sit, lit by a solitary spotlight in an otherwise dark studio. The inspiration for this minimal set design came from the show's creator Bill Wright, who had faced interrogations as a prisoner of war during World War Two. The theme tune by Neil Richardson, aptly titled 'Approaching Menace', adds to the tense and intimidating atmosphere. One quirk of the show is that participants are always referred to as "contenders", never "contestants". When the programme was revived in 2003, everything remained more or less the same, including the theme tune and chair, although it introduced more interaction between new host John Humphrys and the contestants. Some people think that the new version of the show has been 'dumbed down', with more contestants choosing to answer their specialist subject questions on aspects of popular culture, such as *Doctor Who* (BBC, 1963-1989, 2005-) rather than more "intellectual" subjects. There have been many spin-off versions of *Mastermind* including a regular *Junior Mastermind* (BBC, 2004) for ten and eleven-year-olds, a Welsh-language version, *Mastermind Cymru* (SC4, 2006-), and a *Doctor Who* special in 2005. The *Mastermind* format offers the right mix of flexibility and structure to allow these adaptations to work successfully.

While watching the extract:

- Apart from the series winner, no *Mastermind* contender receives a prize. What do you think they gain from taking part?
- How do the set, sound, lighting and the host's style of questioning work towards creating an atmosphere, and how would you describe the atmosphere that is created?



Chapter 9. *Have I Got News for You* (BBC, 1990)

Extract Duration: 3 minutes, 25 seconds

Director: John F D Northover

Cast: Angus Deayton, Paul Merton, Ian Hislop, Kate Saunders, Sandi Toksvig



Programme context:

Have I Got News for You (BBC, 1990-) is a satirical news quiz that asks questions based on recent news events and current affairs. The programme was broadcast on BBC Two between 1990 and 2000 and on BBC One from 2000 onwards. The original panel line-up (from 1990 to 2002), was Angus Deayton as chairman, with Ian Hislop (Editor of the satirical magazine *Private Eye*), and comedian Paul Merton as team captains. Each captain is accompanied by a guest, usually a politician, journalist or comedian, or somebody particularly relevant to recent news. In October 2002, Angus Deayton was fired as host following newspaper headlines about his private life and use of illegal drugs. Since then the show has been hosted by numerous guest presenters, which has boosted average audience ratings from 6 million to 7 million.

The scores and quiz aspect of *Have I Got News for You* are largely ignored in favour of the panelists' witty exchanges and jokes. The format changes frequently, but generally includes rounds such as; the "Film Round", in which silent news video clips are played to the teams, who then identify the story behind them and add their own views; "Odd One Out", where four pictures of personalities or characters are presented to a team, who must identify the odd one out and the news story that connects the other three; and "Missing Words", where newspaper headlines are displayed - with words blanked out - for the panelists to identify. Usually featured is an obscure "guest publication" from which some of the headlines are taken. In the past, these have included *Goat World*, *Arthritis News* and *International Car Park Design*.

Rather than having objectively set questions like other quiz shows, *Have I Got News for You* panelists are shown the questions (but not the answers) before each show. This removes some of the show's spontaneity, but it suits its purpose as a comedy panel show, rather than as a serious quiz. Responding to criticisms of this method, team captain Paul Merton said in 1999; "There is a certain amount of show business that goes on in putting on a show [...] We found very early on that it's worth seeing the questions beforehand so that you can work out your depth of ignorance. If you really don't know, you think, 'Well, I've really got to try and say something here.' It's much better to be doing that for ten or fifteen minutes before the show than be doing it when the cameras are rolling, in front of an audience." Essentially, *Have I Got News for You* uses questions simply a catalyst for humour and entertainment, rather than for testing knowledge.

Each episode is recorded a couple of days before the programme is broadcast and around an hour's worth of material is recorded for each 30-minute programme. Because of the show's satirical, light-hearted format and focus on political figures and celebrities, it has cultivated a reputation for being potentially libelous. This gap between recording and broadcasting gives BBC lawyers a chance to request cuts of any libelous material, while also ensuring the content of the programme remains topical. The scheduling pattern of *Have I Got News for You* and other comedy quiz shows like *Q!* (BBC, 2003-) and *Never Mind the Buzzcocks* (BBC, 1996-) is closer to the model applied to comedy programmes than quiz shows, in that they are often repeated within the same week or in later months to attract a second audience, something which does not generally happen with normal quiz shows. In recent years, the late-night weekend repeat has contained extra material from the week's recording. These repeated episodes are around 40 minutes long and are advertised in TV listings as *Have I Got a Bit More News for You*.

While watching the extract:

- What quiz show conventions can you identify in this extract and how are they used or adapted for comedy purposes?

Chapter 10. *Countdown* (YTV, 1996)

Extract Duration: 3 minutes

Writer(s): Armand Jammoi (creator)

Producer / Director: John Meade

Cast: Richard Whiteley (host), Carol Vorderman, Barry Cryer



Programme context:

At 4.45pm on Tuesday November 2nd, 1982, Channel 4 broadcast its first ever programme, an edition of the teatime quiz show *Countdown* (Channel 4, 1982-). A letters and numbers quiz based on a French format *Des chiffres et des lettres* (1965-), *Countdown's* rules are simple; two players compete to display their verbal and mathematical agility, whether it's composing the longest possible word from a random selection of letters or attempting to reach a target number using only preselected numbers. Contestants get thirty seconds per round, which is counted down on a large clock behind them. Each episode concludes with the 'Countdown Conundrum', a nine-letter anagram that's often used as a tie-breaker. Series winners are awarded a leather-bound Oxford English Dictionary, and since Richard Whiteley's death in 2005, winners are also awarded the Richard Whiteley Memorial Trophy.

Countdown began life on Yorkshire Television in 1982 and was used to fill an eight week gap in their Spring schedule. Luckily, at around the same time, Channel 4 were looking for a game show for their launch schedule, and decided upon the French format *Des chiffres et des lettres* (1965-). Since Yorkshire was already making a British version, they simply transferred the show to Channel 4. Simple to understand and cheap to make, *Countdown* was initially commissioned for seven weeks (screening four times a week), but has remained a fixture of Channel 4's schedule ever since, celebrating its 4000th programme on 3rd January 2006. Few people watching in 1982 would have predicted that *Countdown* would become Channel 4's longest-running programme, the general consensus being that an old-fashioned game show format was hardly appropriate for a new, supposedly cutting-edge channel dedicated to experiment and innovation. But *Countdown* had a ramshackle charm all of its own that proved a huge hit with audiences.

Richard Whiteley, who hosted the programme until his sudden death in 2005, was the opposite of a smooth, slick television presenter. Always cheerful, and with a fondness for making puns, he was renowned for putting nervous contestants at their ease. His best-known co-presenter, Carol Vorderman began as the programme's resident maths expert before becoming co-presenter in her own right, and her partnership with Whiteley became one of the greatest in quiz show history - much more than the traditional host/hostess relationship. After Richard Whiteley's death, *Countdown* was hosted by Desmond Lynam, who was succeeded eighteen months later by Des O'Connor, with Carol Vorderman remaining as co-presenter. Vorderman left the programme herself in 2008 following a pay dispute with Channel 4. As of January 2009, Jeff Stelling and Rachel Riley have been the programme's host and 'letters hostess.'

Countdown is the mainstay of Channel 4's afternoon schedule and attracts an audience of pensioners, students and other people who are not at work between 4.00pm and 5.00pm on a weekday afternoon. Inevitably with such a successful format, 'Champion of Champions' and Celebrity versions have also been made.

While watching the extract:

- How would you describe Whiteley's hosting style and how does it compare to that of the hosts you have seen so far?
- How does Carol Vorderman's role compare to that of the traditional quiz show hostess?

Chapter 11. *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?* (Carlton, 2000)

Extract Duration: 3 minutes, 15 seconds

Writer(s): David Briggs, Steve Knight and Mike Whitehall (creator)

Director: Patricia Mordecai

Cast: Chris Tarrant (host)



Programme context:

Who Wants to be a Millionaire? (ITV, 1998-) offers very large cash prizes for correctly answering consecutive multiple-choice questions of increasing difficulty (the maximum cash prize in the original British version is one million pounds, however there are now many international versions, which offer a top prize of one million units of the local currency). Contestants can quit at any time and keep their earnings, but if they answer a question incorrectly, they fall back to the last "guarantee point" - either £1,000 or £32,000 - and their game is over. At any point, the contestant may use their three "lifelines"; a "50:50" option (two of the three incorrect answers are removed); "Phone a friend" (the contestants can speak to a friend or relative on the phone for 30 seconds to get their help with the question); and "Ask the audience" (the audience votes on their choice of answer via an electronic keypad). In 2007, it was announced that the UK version of *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* was changing its format slightly, cutting the number of questions it takes to reach the £1 million jackpot from 15 to 12, with the prize money starting at £500 rather than £100.

The original format for *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?* was devised by David Briggs with comedy writers Mike Whitehill and Steve Knight and its working title was *Cash Mountain*. When the programme first aired in the UK on September 4th 1998, it offered some surprising twists on traditional game show conventions; only one contestant played at a time and the emphasis was on suspense rather than speed as no time limit is enforced to answer questions. Also, contestants are given the question before they decide whether to attempt an answer.

The format makes the task of winning a million pounds appear fairly simple, but the emphasis is always on suspense, tension and drama. This atmosphere is largely achieved through sound and set design, with dramatic lighting, an arena-style circular set and tense background music which runs almost continuously throughout the whole show. Frequent close-ups of the contestants' faces emphasise their personal dilemma and Chris Tarrant boosts the tension with his well known catchphrase, "Is that your final answer?", and excruciatingly long pauses before revealing the answers.

Episodes are shown on consecutive nights and if a contestant is still playing by the end of a programme they return on the next episode. This combination of format and scheduling techniques - along with the promise of a huge potential prize - encourages audiences to tune in day after day to watch the contestants' progress. These methods made *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* a guaranteed ratings hit. Towards the end of the first series, the show was attracting more than 18 million viewers, making it more popular than ITV's long-running audience favourite, *Coronation Street* (ITV, 1960-). The highest UK ratings for the programme were recorded in March 1999 when 19.2 million people tuned in.

Because potential contestants have to use a premium rate phone line to apply to be on the programme, *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* capitalises on audience interactivity as a key source of revenue.

Who Wants to Be a Millionaire? has become the most internationally popular television franchise of all time, having aired in over 100 countries worldwide. Some countries have remade the programme with their own hosts and in their own language, but the format, set design and music remain the same. The show has become so successful that it has generated a huge amount of money for international production companies; in 2006, Celador was able to sell the format of *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* to Dutch company 2waytraffic for £137.5m, and it is has since been sold to the Japanese production company Sony Pictures Television International.

Who Wants to Be a Millionaire? has also attracted a great deal of media attention, which illustrates the programme's place in modern popular culture. In September 1998 the programme was the subject of press speculation even before it aired thanks to its huge prize, the largest in quiz show history as broadcasting regulations had restricted prizes until 1990. In November 2000 Judith Keppel became the first person to answer all fifteen questions correctly in the UK version of the show – an event that understandably made the national news – but the episode happened to coincide with the last ever episode of the popular situation comedy *One Foot in the Grave* (1990-2000) on rival channel BBC One, and allegations of a fix were made that provoked even more media attention. In 2001 the show was embroiled in yet another scandal when contestant Major Charles Ingram was accused of cheating by having accomplices in the studio audience cough to guide him to the correct answers. Few other British television programmes - let alone quiz shows - have been the subject of so much media attention.

Variations of the show have included editions with couples and celebrity versions in which the winnings are donated to charity. Though its format and scheduling have been modified over the years, *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* remains a stalwart of ITV programming and one of the most successful television programmes of all time.

While watching the extract:

- What do you think has made *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* an internationally successful format?
- In what ways does the programme build suspense?
- In what ways does the programme encourage audience interaction?
- In 2007, the UK version of *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* changed its format slightly, cutting the number of questions from 15 to 12, and starting the prize money at £500 rather than £100. Why do you think this might have been done?

Other Resources

Written Resources

Online Controlled Test resources available for free download at
<http://www.collinseducation.com/autosites/default.aspx?pageID=1441>

GCSE Media Studies for AQA by Mandy Esseen, Ann Riley and Martin Phillips published by Heinemann ISBN 0435109693

GCSE Media Studies by John Price published by Nelson Thornes ISBN 0748767037

Looking at Media Studies for GCSE by Julian Bowker published by Hodder Arnold ISBN 0340848553

Investigating Media Studies by Mike Edwards et al published by Hodder Arnold ISBN 0340758384

Teaching Quiz Shows - Wendy Helsby Auteur Publishing (2008)
ISBN: 978-1-903663-94-3

Articles

[http://www.oxfordstudent.com/tt2004wk1/Features/is_that_your_final_answer%3F 'Is that Your Final Answer?'](http://www.oxfordstudent.com/tt2004wk1/Features/is_that_your_final_answer%3F%20%27Is%20that%20Your%20Final%20Answer%27)

Books

Holmes, Su *The Quiz Show* (Edinburgh University Press, published 15th October 2008)
ISBN 10-0748627529 (This is not a student text but may be of interest to teachers.)

Websites

TV Heaven programme database: <http://www.nationalmediamuseum.org.uk/Television/TvHeaven.asp>

<http://www.museum.tv/>

<http://www.quizplayers.com/>

<http://www.ukgameshows.com/>

TV Heaven Plus: Quiz Show Extract Worksheets

Chapter 1. *Take Your Pick* (ATV, 1955)

While watching the extract:

- How would you describe the contestants and their relationship with host Michael Miles?
- Why do you think the viewing audience is shown shots of the studio audience?

Chapter 2. *Crackerjack* (BBC, 1958)

While watching the extract:

- How does *Crackerjack* appeal to its young target audience? Think particularly about the types of questions being asked, the prizes on offer, the studio audience and any 'interactive' elements.
- Do you think that children today would still enjoy *Crackerjack*?
- What comments can you hear that reveal something about social attitudes of the 1950s?

Chapter 3. *University Challenge* (Granada, 1962)

While watching the extract:

- What do you think the questions reveal about *University Challenge*'s target audience and why do you think the move from ITV to the BBC may have helped attract more viewers?
- Compare this extract to the *Take Your Pick* extract. How does it differ in its presentation and tone?

Chapter 4. *Double Your Money* (ATV, 1966)

While watching the extract:

- How would you describe Hughie Green's interaction with the contestants and studio audience and what effect might this have on the viewers at home?
- What do you think the questions and prizes reveal about the time the programme was made?
- What similarities can you see between *Double Your Money's* format and that of *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?* (extract 11)?

Chapter 5. *Blankety Blank* (BBC, 1979)

While watching the extract:

- What purpose do you think the celebrity panellists serve? Would you say the focus of the programme is on who wins, the humour or a balance of both?
- Consider the use of set design, music and prizes and how they contribute to the overall tone of the show.

Chapter 6. *Family Fortunes* (ATV, 1980)

While watching the extract:

- Bob Monkhouse was a famous comedian as well as a game show host. How does this come across during the extract and what purpose does his humour serve?

Chapter 7. *Bullseye* (Central, 1982)

While watching the extract:

- Do you think *Bullseye*'s Sunday evening timeslot had an effect on its popularity? What kind of an audience would be watching at this time?
- Can you identify the conventions of the quiz show genre that have been adapted to suit the darts theme?

Chapter 8. *Mastermind* (BBC, 1989)

While watching the extract:

- Apart from the series winner, no *Mastermind* contender receives a prize. What do you think they gain from taking part?
- How do the set, sound, lighting and the host's style of questioning work towards creating an atmosphere, and how would you describe the atmosphere that is created?

Chapter 9. *Have I Got News for You* (BBC, 1990)

While watching the extract:

- What quiz show conventions can you identify in this extract and how are they used or adapted for comedy purposes?

Chapter 10. *Countdown* (YTV, 1996)

While watching the extract:

- How would you describe Whiteley's hosting style and how does it compare to that of the hosts you have seen so far?
- How does Carol Vorderman's role compare to that of the traditional quiz show hostess?

Chapter 11. *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?* (Carlton, 2000)

While watching the extract:

- What do you think makes *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* an internationally successful format?
- In what ways does the programme build suspense?
- In what ways does the programme encourage audience interaction?
- In 2007, the UK version of *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* changed its format slightly, cutting the number of questions from 15 to 12, and starting the prize money at £500 rather than £100. Why do you think this might have been done?

TV Heaven Plus: Quiz Shows Evaluation Form

We are currently developing further TV Heaven Plus packs for Media Studies students. We would be grateful if you could take a few moments to fill in the following questions to help us improve our educational offer.

Many thanks,
The TV Heaven team.

What did you like about the TV Heaven Plus: Quiz Shows pack?

What could be improved about the TV Heaven Plus: Quiz Shows pack?

What other television topics would you like to see covered in TV Heaven?

Any further comments: