

The Simpsons

'I'm Bart Simpson, who the hell are you?'

The Simpsons is an American animated sitcom created by Matt Groening for the Fox Broadcasting Company. The series is a satirical parody of a working class American lifestyle. Groening created a dysfunctional family and named the characters after members of his own family, substituting Bart for his own name. The show is set in the fictional town of Springfield and parodies American culture, society, television and many aspects of the human condition.

The first broadcast was on 17th December 1989. It has run for nineteen seasons and almost 400 episodes. It has won several awards, including the famous Emmy. Time magazine's December 31, 1999 issue named it the 20th century's best television series. The Simpsons has influenced many adult-oriented animated sitcoms.

CHARACTERS

The Simpsons are a typical family who live in a fictional "Middle American" town of Springfield. Homer, the father, works as a safety inspector at the Springfield Nuclear Power Plant; he is a beer drinker and a dreamer, too. He is married to Marge Simpson, a stereotypical American housewife and mother. They have three children: Bart, a ten-year-old troublemaker; Lisa, a precocious eight-year-old activist, who already reads and has written a number of essays; and Maggie, the baby of the family who rarely speaks, but communicates by sucking on a pacifier. The family owns a dog, Santa's Little Helper, and a cat, Snowball V, renamed Snowball II. Both pets have had starring roles in several episodes. Although the family is dysfunctional, many episodes examine their relationships and bonds with each other and they are often shown to care about one another.

SETTING

The Simpsons takes place in the fictional American town of Springfield in an unknown and impossible-to-determine U.S. state. The show is intentionally evasive in regard to Springfield's location

THEMES

The Simpsons is a satire. It is a parody of the lifestyle of Middle America, of many aspects of the human condition, of American culture and of society as a whole. It even makes fun of television itself. The series centers on a family and their life in a typical American town, serving as a satirical parody of a working class American lifestyle. However, because of its animated nature, The Simpsons' scope is larger than that of a regular sitcom. The town of Springfield acts as a complete universe in which characters can explore the issues faced by modern society. By having Homer work in a nuclear power plant, the show can comment on the state of the environment. Through Bart and Lisa's days at Springfield Elementary School, the show's writers illustrate controversial issues in the field of education.

Some commentators say the show is political in nature. The writers often portray authority figures in a negative light. In The Simpsons, politicians are corrupt, and the local police force is incompetent. Religion also is a recurring theme. In times of crisis, the family often turns to God, and the show has dealt with

most of the major religions.

HUMOR

The show's humor turns on cultural references that cover a wide spectrum of society so that viewers from all generations can enjoy the show. Such references, for example, come from movies, television, music, literature, science, and history.

CRITICISM AND CONTROVERSY

Bart's rebellious nature, which frequently resulted in no punishment for his misbehavior, led some parents and conservatives to characterize him as a poor role model for children. In schools, educators claimed that Bart was a "threat to learning" because of his negative attitude regarding his education. In a 1991 interview, Bill Cosby described Bart as a bad role model for children, calling him "angry, confused, frustrated". In response, Matt Groening said, "That sums up Bart, all right. Most people are in a struggle to be normal. He thinks normal is very boring, and does things that others just wished they dare do."

Despite the criticism, The Simpsons manages to maintain a large viewership and attracts new fans.

A1. The Simpsons ...

T **F**

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| A) is a satirical television program | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B) is a situational comedy | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C) are a typical American working class family | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| D) is set in a real town | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

A2. The term 'broadcast' refers to ...

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| A) a magazine | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B) a group of actors | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C) an episode | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| D) a season | <input type="checkbox"/> |

A3. The Emmy is ...

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| A) a television industry | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B) a magazine | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C) a television series | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| D) a television production award | <input type="checkbox"/> |

A4. Homer Simpson ...

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| A) adores drinking beer | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| B) never drinks beer | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- C) doesn't mind drinking beer
D) seldom drinks beer

A5. Marge Simpson ...

T F

- A) doesn't work
B) is a conventional American mother
C) is an unconventional American mother
D) is married to Bart Simpson

A6. The Simpsons is a satire of ...

T F

- A) today's human condition, culture, society and television
B) past times human condition, culture, society and television
C) American working class
D) modern society and education

A7. The sitcom is centred on ...

- A) political and religious themes, too
B) positive political figures, too
C) negative political figures, too
D) both positive and negative figures

A8. The term 'spectrum' refers to ...

T F

- A) ghost
B) range
C) aspects
D) mirror

A9. The Simpsons has been criticized because ...

- A) Bart is portrayed as 'normal'
B) Bart is not a bad student
C) Bart is considered a negative role for children
D) Bart is a peaceful character

A10. Nowadays The Simpsons ...

T F

- A) rarely attracts new followers
B) always attracts new followers
C) is one of the most successful television series



D) is watched by million viewers

A11. What is "The Simpsons"?

A12. Who created "The Simpsons"?

A13. Where is "The Simpsons" set?

A14. When was the first broadcast?

A15. Has "The Simpsons" won any awards?

A16. What is Springfield?

A17. What does Homer do?

A18. How many children has Homer got?

A19. Who is Marge?

A20. How old are Bart and Lisa?

A21. How does Maggie communicate?

A22. Have pets had important roles in the sitcom?

A23. Do we exactly know where Springfield is?

A24. What is "The Simpsons" a parody of?

A25. Does "The Simpsons" concern with social themes too?

A26. Why do people believe that Bart is a negative model for children?

A27. Do you like "The Simpsons"? Why?

A28. Who is your favorite character? Why?
