

**The Simpsons (Media)**

**Does Matt Groening succeed in making his cartoon appeal to such a wide audience?**

Matt Groening succeed in making his animated cartoon, 'The Simpsons' appeal to such a wide audience as it is a highly sophisticated and expensive operation with a multi million-dollar budget. It is successful worldwide as many people enjoy watching the show. The show uses a 36-piece orchestra for background music, a committee of fifteen scriptwriters who writes the scripts and it uses between 20 and 30 thousand drawings for each episode. The Simpson's began as a short cartoon slots for the Tracy Ullman Show. But it became so successful that in December 1989, Fox Network decided to produce 30minute version, which is now in it's 14<sup>th</sup> season.

Matt Groening based the characters on his own family.

Each member of the Simpsons family is different:

Homer is a working class father, a safety inspector in the nuclear power plant. He's overweight and often spends all his money on drink. He often acts on impulse, which mostly leads to trouble.

Marge is typecast as the typical American housewife, who cooks, cleans and tries to be a good mother. She is good-natured and sticks by Homer, regardless of anything.

Bart is a mischievous, rude ten years old, who never listens to adults and loves playing practical jokes on people making children of all ages latched on to Bart.

Lisa is younger than Bart, but far smarter as she's witty and very intelligent. Lisa proves the theory that girls are smarter than boys. For example, Lisa always gets higher grades than Bart and is also the teacher's pet.

Maggie is the youngest out of all these three children; she is the ideal baby, as she never cries.

The show rescued Fox TV, from bankruptcy when it was launched. It then became an investment as the show became successful in both America and Worldwide.

'Something that's really family entertainment will appeal to the least sophisticated member of the audience, and the most sophisticated member of the audience on different levels' is Matt Groening's attitude to his creation. His aim was to attract a large audience appealing to both children and adults, which takes animation to a new level of sophistication. The creators of the show work to one basic rule: The Simpsons are never a mere cartoon. They can do any fantasy, flash forward and hallucination. Also, they can actually show the shows that the family is watching. The most popular cartoon show ever is also prepared to satirise their cartoon through the ultra violent 'Itchy & Scratchy Show' which mocks the famously known cartoon, 'Tom & Jerry' that is watched by the Simpson children. In a regular programme the writers wouldn't be able to do that.

The funny and entertaining comedy, 'The Simpsons' is as complex as any 'real' family. The Simpsons family are caricatures of the typical stereotypes of a troublesome American family. The show uses sarcasm and irony to ridicule many aspects of society and its values. The violence in some of the scenes can be enjoyed by the less sophisticated while seen by more sophisticated viewers as a satire on the electric chair, capital punishment, is the American belief in the power of family therapy and other American values. It uses political themes, humorous themes and to

## Coursework

do with being a young person in society. This is what makes the show interesting to both adults and children.

The episode we studied was 'There's no disgrace like home' which explores modern issues. The relationship between the Simpsons family is full of problems. They argue frequently and have no time for each other. The Simpson's next-door neighbour are the perfect family, they are the stereotype of the 'American Dream' it tackles these issues within the context of a cartoon by adding humour.

The story in the episode is about Homer realising that his family is not perfect. It begins with Homer taking his family to the company picnic given by his boss of the nuclear power industry, Mr Burns. They come to the picnic and bring with them red, purple, green and blue Jell-o, in an effort to impress Mr Burns. Before they arrive, Homer tries to prepare his family for the company picnic and tells them that 'as far as anyone knows we're a nice family'.

Homer sees that his boss prefers a family that treats one another with love and respect. And then wonders why he is cursed with his family that do not treat each other the same way. The family then go spying on other families, they see happy, caring and loving families who are sharing quality time together.

He stops by at Moe's tavern the local pub, as he is convinced that both he and his family are losers, where he sees a television advertisement for Dr Marvin Monroe's Family Center. When Homer hears that Dr. Monroe 'guarantees family bliss or double you money back', he then decides to pawn his TV set for the money and signs up the family.

During the therapy session, Dr Monroe uses his standard approaches but when this proves hopeless in civilising the family, he resorts to shock therapy. In this scene it uses satire to show Matt Groening's disapproval of the use of the electric chairs as a death penalty. It is a remake of 'A Clockwork Orange' (1971) where the Simpsons family are seated in a stark white laboratory, wired to electrodes, fronted by a bank of buttons giving them the ability to send electrical shocks to one another.

The family continually keep sending electrical shocks; the doctor resigns to fact that the Simpsons are incurable. He sends the Simpsons home with double their money back, so with \$500 now, Homer then takes the happy family to buy a new television.

This episode was mainly about the differences and problems within a family. Their relationship as a family was not very good, they didn't understand or respect one another and ridiculed each other's views. Even so, this makes the programme addictive to so many people, which is how Matt Groening succeeded in making his cartoon appeal to such a wide audience.