

## Handout - *Leave It to Beaver* and *I Love Lucy* (Teacher's Guide)

*Leave It to Beaver* and *I Love Lucy* were two popular television shows in the 1950s. While both depict families in the 1950s and represent the theme of conformity of the time period, to an extent *I Love Lucy* challenges the idea of conformity during this time period. Use guided research below to compare and contrast the two shows to learn more about television in the 1950s.

**Step 1:** With your partner, decide which show you would like to research: *Leave it to Beaver* or *I Love Lucy*

**Step 2:** Conduct research on your chosen show with the questions below to guide your research (use images, video clips, show summaries, reviews and articles for your research).

**Step 3:** Ask your partner the below questions about the show they researched. Circle the show they researched, and provide their answers. Then repeat the process. (For example, the person who researched *I Love Lucy* should ask questions to their partner about *Leave it to Beaver*, then the person who researched *Leave it to Beaver* should ask questions to their partner about *I Love Lucy*.)

### Leave it to Beaver/*I Love Lucy*

1. What is the show about?

*I Love Lucy* is a comedy following Lucy and Ricky Ricardo, a young couple living in New York City with their son Little Ricky. Little Ricky was born during the second season of the show.

*Leave it to Beaver* follows Theodore Cleaver (Beaver) and his family as he navigates the world of childhood through misadventures. Set in the fictional town of Mayfield.

2. Describe the main characters in the show.

**Characteristics:** Lucy is a housewife who wants to get into show business. She is ambitious and often gets herself into messy situations. Ricky is a Cuban bandleader who often gets frustrated with his wife's antics.

Beaver is curious, well meaning, and always getting into some kind of misadventure. Wally (older brother) is considered the All-American boy, and a popular athlete. Ward (father) - wise and patient, who leaves for work but always makes it home for dinner. June (mother) - patient and understanding, does the housework in high heels and pearls while devoted to her family.

**Jobs:** Lucy is a homemaker, aspiring entertainer. Ricky is a Cuban bandleader. Ward works at a trust company in New York City. June is homemaker.

**Social Class:** Both middle class.

**Ethnicities:** Lucy's heritage is never fully discussed but it's possibly Irish or Scottish. Ricky is Cuban American. The family's heritage is never fully discussed but they appear to be Caucasian.

**Gender Roles:** Ricky goes to work while Lucy stays at home while sometimes pursuing entertainment jobs. The show depicts her as being bad at the non entertainment jobs she pursues outside the home.

Ward is the breadwinner and ultimate authority in the house. June is a housewife, shows deference to her husband.



**Step 4:** After filling in each question, discuss the following questions together:

1. In what ways do *Leave it to Beaver* and *I Love Lucy* represent the conformity of the 1950s?
2. In what ways do *Leave it to Beaver* and *I Love Lucy* challenge the conformity of the 1950s?
3. In what ways are both shows similar?
4. In what ways are they different?