



Teachers' Guide: *Game Show Dynamos*

Game Show Dynamos is ideal for American History, Film & Media Studies, Social Studies, Economics, and Language Arts classes. Recommended for high school and undergraduate studies.

Lesson Objectives: The purpose of this lesson plan is for students to respond, in a variety of ways, to a documentary film about the struggles and triumphs of an American family from the Post-Second World War period to the end of the 20th Century.

Summary: **Movie presentation of *Game Show Dynamos*:** The true story of a Bernard and Claire Boiko, who got their family out of debt by repeatedly winning prizes on TV game shows. The family saga spans the years from post-World War II to the end of the 20th Century. Historical highlights include the American occupation of Japan, the Korean War, social culture of the 1950's, the birth and influence of television, the game show phenomenon and the ensuing game show scandal, the impact of unions and the economic rise of the middle class. Social issues include prejudice and bias, fair wages, family economics, mental health, women's roles, and social changes in the 1950's and 1960's.

I. Ways to incorporate this material include:

- A. Watch the film and have students write a plot summary or film review.
- B. Discuss and respond to video questions provided in this packet (V).
- C. Research & write a report on related topics provided in this guide.
- D. Outline, plan and implement a similar project using your own family history. Include interviews with family members. Tell your family's unique story in written word, video, photos, music and artifacts. Be sure to identify the important historical and social events that occurred simultaneously with your own family history. Explain how these phenomena impact the story of your family.
- E. Write a letter to Patricia Boiko or Claire Boiko that expresses your thoughts & feelings about the Boiko family's story. Ask her questions that may not have been answered or included in the film.
- F. Create a Jeopardy game with categories related to the film. Have the students generate the categories, the questions and answers

Materials Needed:

- A. DVD: Game Show Dynamos
- B. Class copies of the Student Video Questions (V – Q's 1 - 13) & Topics for Writing & Discussion (V-Q's 14-20) & Related Internet Source (Section VI).

II. Time Needed:

- A. Preparing for the film – 30 minutes
- B. Viewing the film – 60 minutes
- C. Video discussion questions – 30-45 minutes
- D. Writing assignments, projects, extended learning - homework or class time

III. Preparation: Suggestions for Class Discussion before viewing video.

- A. What game shows do the students currently watch? Why do people like game shows? What purpose do game shows serve the sponsors? The contestants? The audience? Do game shows represent reality or are they primarily show business?
- B. Explore students' knowledge of topics in the film including the occupation of Japan after WWII, the Korean War, Post War economy in the 1950's, GI Bill of Rights, and game show scandal of 1958, United Federation of Teachers' Strike of 1961, social changes in the 1960's.
- C. Discuss the use of home videos as documentation of events in students' own lives. Students share their personal experiences.
- D. Discuss the use of documentary film/video to record historical events. How does this medium expand or distort our understanding of historical and current events? What kinds of music styles are used in the score to enhance the video and express cultural changes?

IV. Video Discussions Questions

Students should review the Video Questions below before watching the film.

Use these questions for your discussion and written assignments after the film.

Questions 1-13 are fact based. Questions 14-21 are open-ended for expanded responses.

1. According to the film, what was Bernard's motivation for joining the Army?
2. What was Claire's motivation? How did Bernard pursue Claire when he was stationed in Japan and Korea?

3. What was Claire's job in the Army in Northern Japan? Bernard's?
4. What was the big secret Bernard was afraid to tell Claire when they were courting?
5. What was Claire's reaction to the secret?
6. What was Bernard's plan for his life after his discharge from the Army?
7. How did the GI Bill of Rights enable Bernard to become a History teacher?
8. What factors caused the Boikos' financial troubles?
9. Describe how Bernard got the idea to audition for his first game show. How did he describe himself to get the attention of the producers?
10. After the game show scandal of 1958, game shows went off the air. How did Bernard then pay for necessities he could not provide with his 3 jobs? Do you agree or disagree with his strategy?
11. Describe Claire's illness and the career she began while recovering.
12. How did the 1960 -1962 United Teachers' Union strike and wage settlement change the Boiko family's life for the better? What did they spend their extra money on?
13. Why did Claire describe Bernard and herself as "game show junkies"?

These questions are open-ended for written responses or further discussion:

14. Describe how Bernard's family and Claire's family were different. How did each family react to Bernard and Claire's wedding? Is it likely or unlikely that their reactions and attitudes would be different today?
15. Why did Susan describe her family as resembling *The Munsters* or *The Beverly Hillbillies*? How did the Boikos compare and contrast to the typical TV families of the era? What qualities made them a typical American family of the 1950's? What made them unique or special?
16. How did Bernard's and Claire's backgrounds and experiences prepare them to be game show stars?
17. What morals, lessons or inspiration do you draw from the story in the film, *Game Show Dynamos*?
18. Sketch the scene that is most memorable to you.
19. Write a letter to:
Winning Pictures, LLC
PO Box 95184
Seattle, Washington 98145-2184
20. Write a review of the film.
21. Listen to the music and sound effects as they reflect the struggles & triumphs of the post second world war through the 20th century for American families. Describe how the music score helps illuminate Bernard and Claire's story? What musical styles and techniques are used?
22. Write an essay contrasting the real life family in this film to families depicted on TV in the 50s. How were real families different from those 1950s TV families? Suggested 1950s TV families include: *I Love Lucy*- 1951, *Ozzie and Harriet* – 1952, *Father Knows Best*- 1954, *The Honeyymooners*-1955, *Leave it to Beaver* -1957 and *The Donna Reed Show* - 1958.

V. Related Internet Sources for Extended Learning

History of Television by Mitchell Stephens

<http://www.nyu.edu/classes/stephens/History%20of%20Television%20page.htm>

GI Bill of Rights

<http://www.benefits.va.gov/gibill/history.asp>

The History of Credit Cards

<http://thehistoryof.net/history-of-credit-cards.html>

United Federation of Teachers UFT History

Video: *The UFT Story* 4:13

Recounts the first strike for collective bargaining rights in 1960

<http://www.uft.org/who-we-are/history>

VI. Other Related Resources:

THE QUIZ SHOW SCANDAL. The American Experience (PBS) episode detailing the scandal.

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/quizshow/filmmore/transcript/index>

In addition to the web sources listed in the Teachers' Guide, students may want to look at additional resources. Web sites sometimes reflect bias and students should question the accuracy of the information.