

*Age Appropriate Content:
a writer's challenge*

by Larry Huber

The Goals of this lecture:

- An Introduction
- A discussion of the term “General Audience”
- A brief history of the ratings system used in the USA: how it came into being / the various categories / typical programming that fits into each category
- The development of the ‘V’ chip
- What’s required within the categories – the writer’s challenge
- The Market Place
- A specific look at preschool programming (Curious George)
- Beat Band (an exercise)

Introduction

- Animation is a global market due to its popularity across all ages. Each market however, receives animation differently. Due to cultural differences and changes, markets vary according to the age of the viewers. This results in several very specific markets based on a number of changing factors. The most common division in this market is age related.

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GENERAL AUDIENCE

- When I am approached to develop animation programming my first question is always “What is the age of the audience?” The most terrifying answer is “General Audiences”.

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- “General Audience” means the animation and the story it tells is acceptable to all ages.
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For example...

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- To clarify, “general audience” means the four year old child sitting on her grandfather’s knee must find the animation as engaging as her grandfather or her mother or her ten year old sister and teen-age brother!

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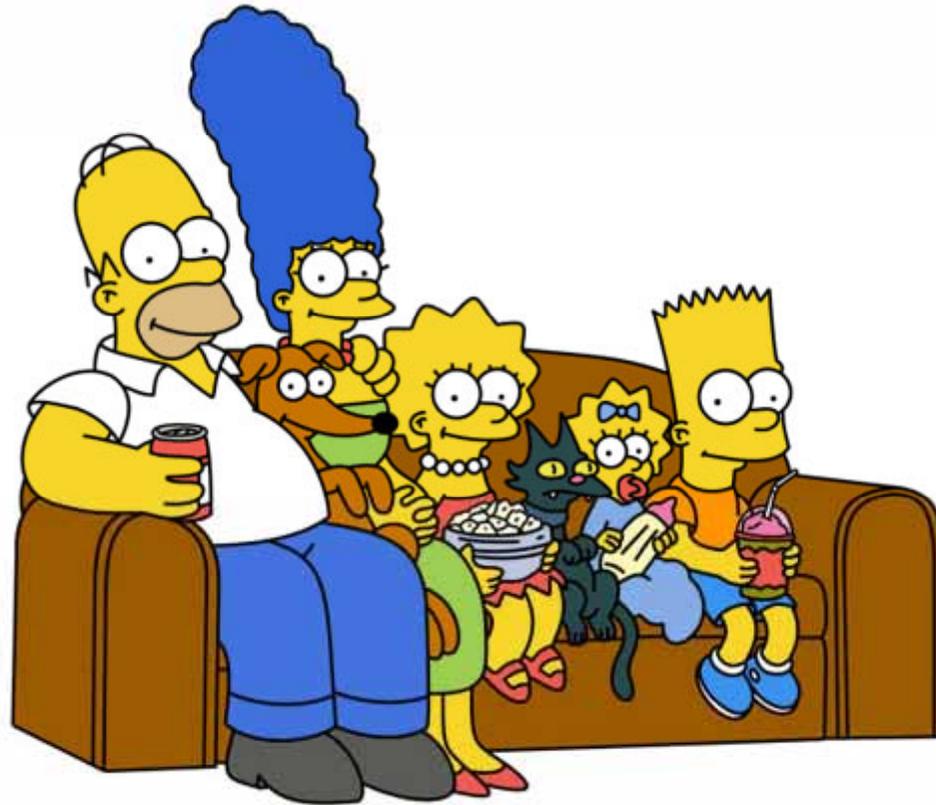
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That description of a “general audience” is *not* a typical family.

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“General Audience” (cont.)

This is generally an unrealistic expectation requiring story elements that are:

- Simple enough to be understood by the youngest members of the audience as well as...
- engaging to the most sophisticated viewer.

This requirement can encompass 70 years of experience, education and historic values.

It is the hardest demographic to hit.

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“General Audience” (cont.)

- “General Audiences” appears to be the goal that most providers of content want to hit but it is not necessary to strive for this difficult to attain ideal.

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“General Audience” (cont.)

- Television is divided into markets along specific age ranges. These markets range from pre-school children to mature adult audiences. Whatever the advertiser is selling, there is a television market for it.

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American TV and children

TV

- American television geared towards children has been a concern among parents since the earliest days of the media. Broadcast television has come under pressure to edit programming to children to ensure that nothing harmful will be viewed by this age group.

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American TV and children (cont.)

TV

- Broadcast Standards and Practices was a department created by the Television Networks in response to this concern. Television critics screened all programming to assure compliance to certain approved standards. Early children's television was produced under these guidelines.

- Broadcast Standards and Practices

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American TV and children (cont.)

TV

- These guidelines were judged by parental organizations to be too lax and they demanded strict federal standards to replace commercial network practices. The compromise between censorship and free-market viewing was to allow parents to decide what their children should watch. To make this attainable, a content ratings system was created.

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THE AMERICAN TELEVISION RATINGS SYSTEM

- A Brief History
- The early movies ratings system in the United States was designed to help parents gain information to help them in making decisions about which movies their children will and will not be allowed to watch.

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THE AMERICAN TELEVISION RATINGS SYSTEM

- The early ratings system was applied to theatrical films.



THE AMERICAN TELEVISION RATINGS SYSTEM

- Once Television programming came on the scene, the need for a similar rating system was desired.
- This TV ratings system was modeled after the ratings system already in place for motion pictures - also a voluntary ratings system. While there is occasionally a blanket rating for a show, generally individual episodes are rated for their content by a monitoring board.

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THE AMERICAN TELEVISION RATINGS SYSTEM

- The “G” rating used for theatrical films.
- “G”
- The “TV-G” rating used for television.
- “TV-G”



THE AMERICAN TELEVISION RATINGS SYSTEM

- TV-G ratings were voluntarily used with broadcast television programs. With the proliferation of programs produced for cable and therefore not under the same restrictions as broadcast television, the concerns voiced by parents resulted in 1996, the USA Federal Communications commission pushed for a ratings system to help guide parents in making viewing decisions for their children.

- TV-G

- TV-G

, 1996

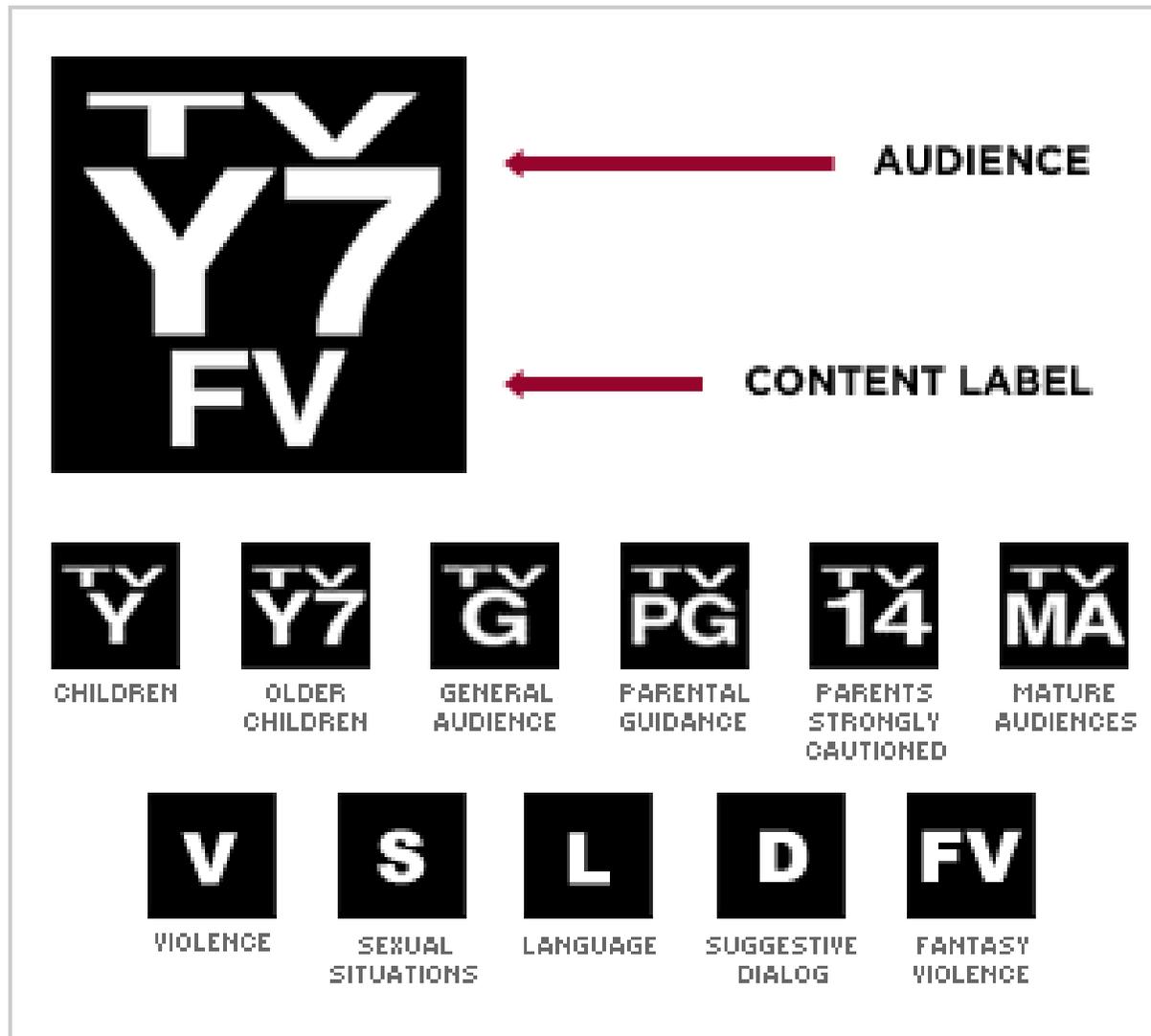
Federal Communications

THE AMERICAN TELEVISION RATINGS SYSTEM

- The ratings were developed by a group of television industry professionals in coordination with the commission and advocacy groups. Including the ratings is voluntary.

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THE RATINGS CATEGORIES



TV-Y

- PROGRAMMING AIMED AT THE YOUNGEST AUDIENCES: TV-Y MEANS THAT THE PROGRAM IS SUITABLE FOR ALL CHILDREN. THERE ARE NO FRIGHTENING IMAGES OR SITUATIONS. THERE IS NO UNSUITABLE LANGUAGE. THIS AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENTALLY MAY NOT EASILY DISTINGUISH BETWEEN REAL AND MAKE BELIEVE, SO MORE CARE IS REQUIRED.

- 가 : TV-Y

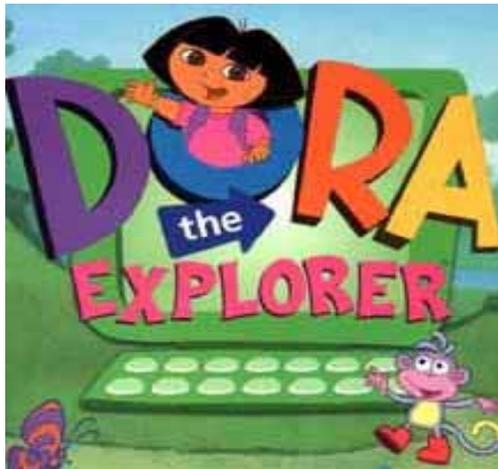
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TV-Y (cont.)

- IN THE UNITED STATES, THESE PROGRAMS HAVE EDUCATIONAL THEMES. DORA THE EXPLORER / BLUES CLUES / CURIOUS GEORGE ALL FALL WITHIN THE PARAMETERS OF THIS RATING.

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EXPLORER/ BLUES CLUES/ CURIOUS GEORGE



TV-Y7

- PROGRAMMING IS DESIGNED FOR AUDIENCES AGED 7 AND ABOVE. PROGRAMMING MAY HAVE EDUCATIONAL THEMES, BUT SOME PROGRAMMING IS TOTALLY FOR ENTERTAINMENT PURPOSES. MAY HAVE MILD/COMEDIC FANTASY OR VIOLENCE - PARENTS SHOULD CONSIDER THE APPROPRIATENESS OF THE PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN YOUNGER THAN 7 YEARS.

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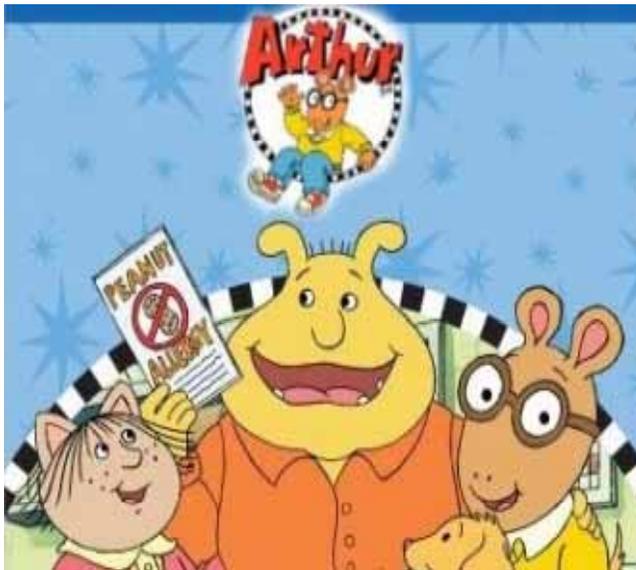
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TV-Y7 (cont.)

- IN THE UNITED STATES THESE SHOWS MAY HAVE EDUCATIONAL ELEMENTS, BUT SOMETIMES ARE PURE ENTERTAINMENT. PBS' ARTHUR & THE MAGIC SCHOOL BUS ARE SHOWS WITH EDUCATIONAL ELEMENTS AND CURRICULUM GOALS.

• . PBS ARTHUR & THE MAGIC SCHOOL BUS
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ARTHUR - PBS

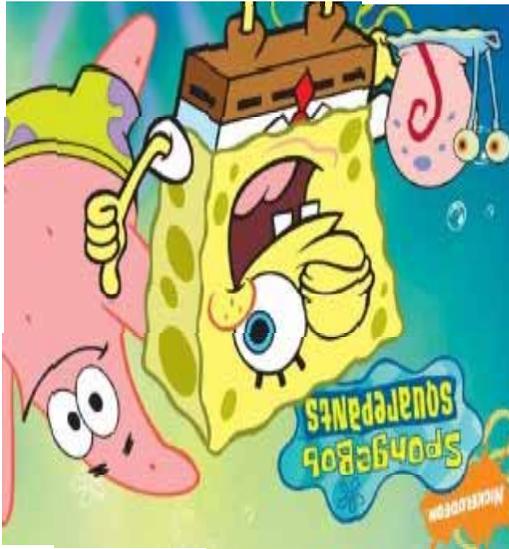


THE MAGIC SCHOOL BUS - PBS

TV-Y7 (cont.)

- WHILE, NICKELODEON'S SPONGE BOB & FILM ROMAN'S GARFIELD ARE **TV-Y7** SHOWS DESIGNED FOR PURE ENTERTAINMENT.

가 TV-Y7



SPONGE BOB - NICKELODEON



GARFIELD & FRIENDS 25 FILM ROMAN

TV-Y7-FV

- DIRECTED TO OLDER CHILDREN - FANTASY VIOLENCE. THIS CATEGORY WAS DESIGNED TO COVER PROGRAMMING WHERE THE FANTASY VIOLENCE IS MORE INTENSE THAN FOUND IN TV-Y7 SHOWS.

TV-Y7



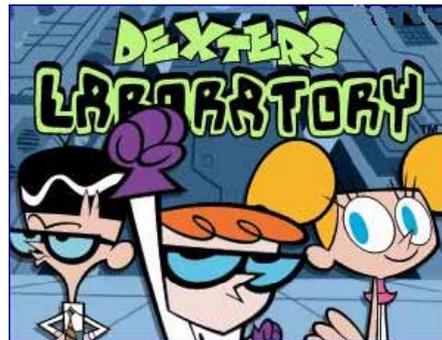
TV-Y7-FV(cont.)

- POWERPUFF GIRLS / DEXTER'S LABORATORY / SUPER MARIO BROTHERS ARE SHOWS THAT FIT WITHIN THIS CATEGORY.

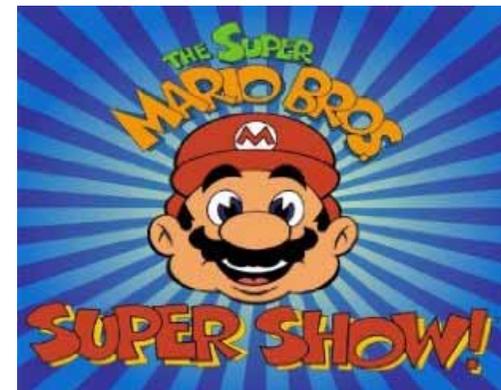
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POWERPUFF GIRLS



DEXTER'S LAB



SUPER MARIO BRO'S

TV-G

- THE EVER POPULAR AND MUCH DESIRED - '**G**' RATING FOR **GENERAL AUDIENCES**. THIS CATEGORY RATING COVERS PROGRAMS THAT MAY NOT HAVE BEEN DESIGNED WITH YOUNG CHILDREN IN MIND, BUT THAT MOST PARENTS WOULD FIND SUITABLE FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY TO WATCH.

• - 'G' •

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TV-G

- PROGRAMS IN THIS CATEGORY CONTAIN MINIMAL (IF ANY) VIOLENCE, MINIMAL (IF ANY) STRONG LANGUAGE AND MINIMAL (IF ANY) SEXUAL DIALOGUE OR SITUATIONS.
- MOST SHOWS WITH GENERAL AUDIENCE RATINGS ARE PRODUCED FOR PURE ENTERTAINMENT. NICKELODEON'S CHALKZONE & FAIRLY ODDPARENTS WERE PRODUCED FOR PURE ENTERTAINMENT.



FAIRLY ODDPARENTS



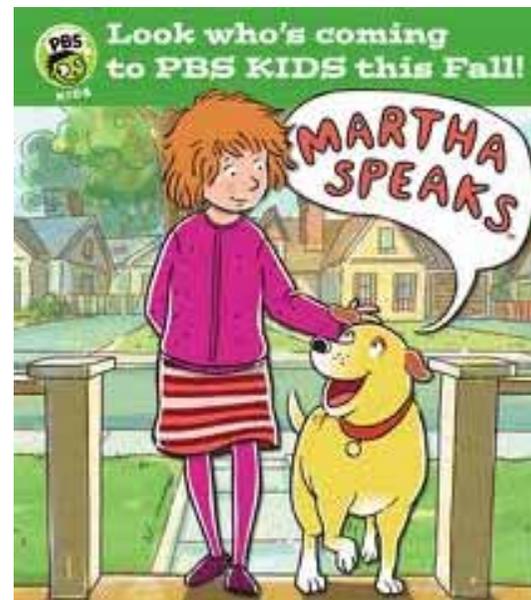
CHALKZONE

TV-G

- WHILE PBS' DANGER RANGERS AND MARTHA SPEAKS ARE **TV-G** SHOWS WITH EDUCATIONAL GOALS.
- PBS Danger rangers Martha speaks TV-G .



DANGER RANGERS - PBS



MARTHA SPEAKS - PBS

TV-PG

- **TV-PG** - PARENTAL GUIDANCE SUGGESTED. PROGRAMS IN THIS CATEGORY CONTAIN MATERIAL OR SITUATIONS THAT THEY WOULD FIND UNSUITABLE FOR YOUNG CHILDREN.
- TV-PG – 가 .



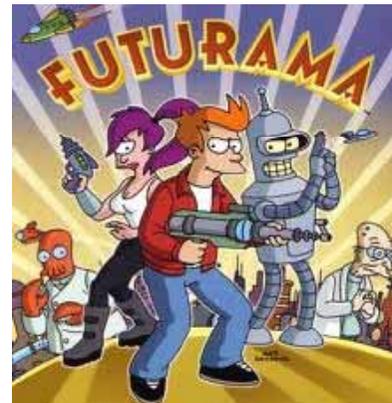
TV-PG (cont.)

- WHEN A **TV-PG** RATING IS GIVEN TO A PROGRAM, IT IS BECAUSE IT CONTAINS ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS: (V) MODERATE VIOLENCE, (S) SOME SEXUAL SITUATIONS, (L) SOME COARSE LANGUAGE OR SWEARING OR (D) MODERATE SUGGESTIVE DIALOGUE
- TV-PG
- (V) , (S) , (L)
- (D)

TV-PG (cont.)

- PROGRAMS THAT SOMETIMES CONTAIN ELEMENTS WHERE PARENTAL GUIDANCE IS SUGGESTED ARE: BEN 10 ALIEN FORCE / BATMAN / FUTURAMA / TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

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: BEN 10 ALIEN FORCE / BATMAN / FUTURAMA / TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES



TV-14

- PARENTS STRONGLY CAUTIONED. PROGRAMS WITHIN THIS CATEGORY CONTAIN MATERIAL THAT MOST PARENTS WOULD FIND UNSUITABLE FOR CHILDREN UNDER 14 TO WATCH UNATTENDED BY AN ADULT. (V) VIOLENCE, (S) SEXUAL SITUATIONS, (L) COARSE LANGUAGE OR SWEARING OR (D) SUGGESTIVE DIALOGUE

14

. (V) , (S) , (L) (D)



TV-14 (cont.)

- FOR SHOWS WITH EPISODES RATED IN THE **TV-14** CATEGORY, IT IS HIGHLY RECOMMENDED THAT PARENTS TAKE GREAT CARE IN DETERMINING IF SUCH PROGRAMS ARE SUITABLE FOR THEIR CHILDREN UNDER AGE 14.
*MARKETS WILL BE LIMITED TO BROADCASTER WITH HOURS SET ASIDE FOR ADULT PROGRAMMING AND TO BROADCASTERS WHO ONLY DEAL WITH ADULT PROGRAMMING: ADULT SWIM / SPIKE / COMEDY CENTRAL

TV-14

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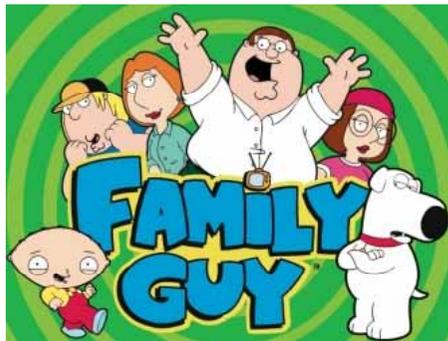
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- ADULT SWIM / SPIKE / COMEDY

CENTRAL-



FAMILY GUY - FOX



BOONDOCKS - COMEDY CENTRAL

TV-MA

- TV-MA IS AIMED AT MATURE AUDIENCE ONLY. THESE PROGRAMS ARE DESIGNED FOR ADULTS (17 AND OLDER) AND NOT FOR CHILDREN AT ALL. THE STORY LINES AND IMAGERY FREQUENTLY HAVE (V) VIOLENCE, (S) SEXUAL SITUATIONS, (L) PROFANE LANGUAGE AND STRONGLY (D) EXPLICIT DIALOGUE

- TV-MA (17)
(V) , (S) , (L) (D)



TV-MA (cont.)

- PROGRAMS WITH THIS RATING ARE CONSIDERED UNSUITABLE FOR CHILDREN UNDER AGE 17. SHOWS THAT FALL UNDER THIS RATING ARE: SOUTH PARK / DRAWN TOGETHER *MARKETS WILL BE LIMITED TO BROADCASTERS FOR ADULT PROGRAMMING: ADULT SWIM / SPIKE / COMEDY CENTRAL

- 17 가 ; SOUTH PARK / DRAWN TOGETHER
*
: ADULT SWIM / SPIKE / COMEDY CENTRAL



SOUTH PARK – COMEDY CENTRAL

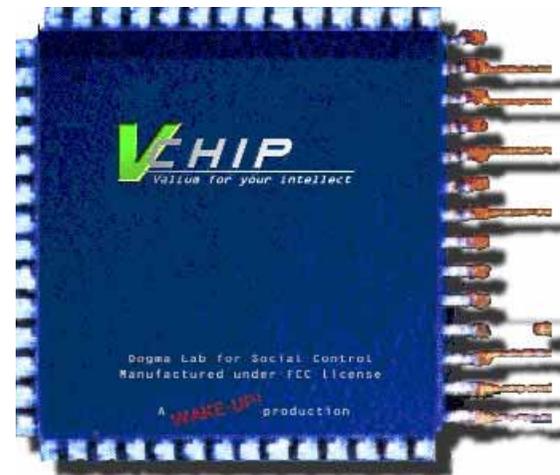


DRAWN TOGETHER 37ADULT SWIM

THE “V” CHIP DEVICE

- WITH SO MANY AVENUES OF **TV-MA** PROGRAMMING, SINCE 2000, MANUFACTURERS HAVE INCLUDED A **V-CHIP DEVICE** BUILT INTO THE TV SET.
- THIS V-CHIP ALLOWS PARENTS TO DIGITALLY PREVENT VIEWING OF PROGRAMMING THAT HAS A TV RATING OF ANY TYPE THEY WISH TO BLOCK.

• TV-MA , 2000 , TV



THE “V” CHIP DEVICE (cont.)

- HOW THE V-CHIP FUNCTIONS: THE V-CHIP DEVICE DIGITALLY 'RECOGNIZES' THE RATINGS ON A SHOW BEING BROADCAST. PARENTS CAN PROGRAM THEIR SETS TO KEEP OUT SHOWS WITH A PARTICULAR RATING.

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THE MARKET PLACE

- WHERE DO I PITCH MY PRODUCT?

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WHAT'S REQUIRED WITHIN CATEGORIES?

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- **THE MARKET PLACE.** Where do you place your product? Do your homework and research.
- For example, you shouldn't approach **Disney** with a show that obviously falls into the **TV-MA** category. They don't produce or distribute such programming. They produce with a "family audience" in mind.

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TV-MA
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WHAT'S REQUIRED WITHIN CATEGORIES? (cont.)

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- For the purposes of this presentation the focus will be on the first four categories only:

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1 – 3 (THE YOUNGEST AUDIENCE)

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4 – 7 (PRE-SCHOOL TO YOUNG SCHOOL AGE)

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4 – 7 (BUT FANTASY & MILDLY SCARY)

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6 – 9 (SCHOOL AGED CHILDREN)

(42)

WHAT'S REQUIRED WITHIN CATEGORIES? (cont.)

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- Let's work our way backwards: From '**G**' General Audience shows (with the least amount of requirements by broadcasters), to '**Y**' (with the most number of requirements by broadcasters.)

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WHAT'S REQUIRED FOR A 'G' GENERAL AUDIENCE?

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A SHOW AIMED AT A GENERAL AUDIENCE WILL REQUIRE:

- A CLEAR VISION OF SHOW
- A CLEAR EPISODE IDEAS THAT MATCH VISION
- A VISUAL STYLE CONCEPT
- STORYLINES THAT APPEAL TO A BROAD RANGE OF AGES
- NOTE: IF YOUR SHOW IDEA HAS EDUCATIONAL ELEMENTS -
HAVE A CLEAR SET OF GOALS THAT ARE PART OF THE OVERALL
VISION OF THE SHOW.

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SAMPLE 'G' SHOWS AND THEIR MARKETS

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CHALKZONE -
NICKELODEON



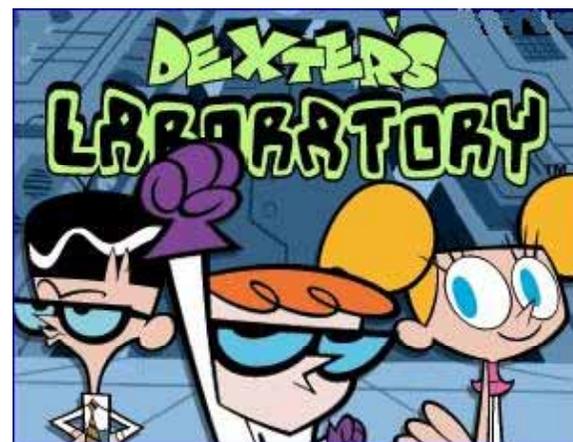
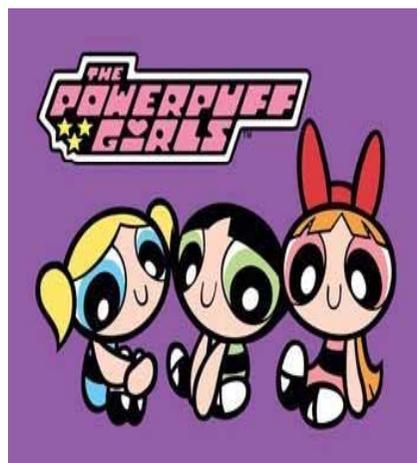
DANGER RANGERS -
PBS

- 'TV-G' MARKETS: DISNEY - DISNEY CHANNEL / CARTOON NETWORK / NICKELODEON / PBS / QUBO / WARNER BROTHERS / THE HUB (HASBRO-DISCOVERY)

- TV-G : DISNEY - DISNEY CHANNEL / CARTOON NETWORK / NICKELODEON / PBS / QUBO / WARNER BROTHERS / THE HUB (HASBRO-DISCOVERY)

SAMPLE 'TV-Y7-FV' SHOWS AND THEIR MARKETS

'TV-Y7-FV'



POWERPUFF GIRLS & DEXTER'S LAB – CARTOON NETWORK

- SIMILAR TO GENERAL AUDIENCE PROGRAMS: CLEAR VISION OF SHOW / CLEAR EPISODE IDEAS THAT MATCH VISION / VISUAL STYLE CONCEPT AND STORYLINES THAT APPEAL TO YOUNGER

SAMPLE 'TV-Y7-FV' SHOWS AND THEIR MARKETS (cont.)

'TV-Y7-FV'



JIM HENSON'S
DINOSAUR TRAIN -
PBS



Doc McStuffins

DOC MCSTUFFINS -
DISNEY

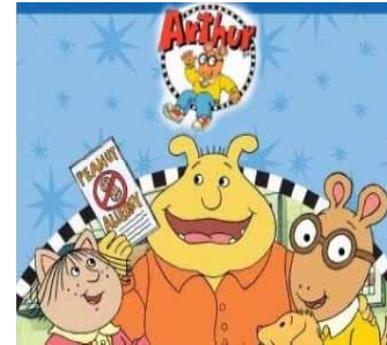
- IF YOUR TV-Y7-FV SHOW IDEA HAS EDUCATIONAL ELEMENTS - HAVE A CLEAR SET OF GOALS THAT ARE PART OF THE OVERALL VISION OF THE SHOW.

SAMPLE 'TV-Y7' SHOWS AND THEIR MARKETS

'TV-Y7'



SPONGE BOB -
NICKELODEON



ARTHUR - PBS

- TV-Y7 DOES NOT REQUIRE EDUCATIONAL COMPONENT BUT FOR THOSE THAT DO, INCLUDE CLEAR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR THE SERIES AND INDIVIDUAL EPISODES.
- 'TV-Y7' MARKETS: PBS MARKETS FOR SHOWS WITH EDUCATIONAL COMPONENTS / DISNEY JR. / CARTOON NETWORK / NICKELODEON OR NICK JR. / QUBO / WARNER BROTHERS / THE HUB (HASBRO-DISCOVERY)

- TV-Y7

SAMPLE 'TV-Y' SHOWS AND THEIR MARKETS

'TV-Y'



BLUES CLUES
- NICK JR.



CURIOUS GEORGE
- PBS

- IN THE UNITED STATES, ALMOST ALL PROGRAMMING FOR THE 'TV-Y' CATEGORY HAS EDUCATIONAL COMPONENTS.

SAMPLE 'TV-Y' SHOWS AND THEIR MARKETS

'TV-Y'

- WITH THE PUSH FOR MULTI-PLATFORM PROGRAMMING (BROADCAST / (INTERNET / PODCASTS / CELLPHONE APPS / PUBLISHING) THEY ALSO REQUIRE RESOURCES FOR PARENTS AND TEACHERS TO ACCESS MATERIALS RELATED TO TOPICS COVERED IN THE SERIES EPISODES.

- 'TV-Y' MARKETS: PBS KIDS - SPROUT / DISNEY JR. / NICK JR. / QUBO / THE HUB (HASBRO-DISCOVERY)

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- 'TV-Y' _____: PBS KIDS - SPROUT / DISNEY JR. / NICK JR. / QUBO / THE HUB (HASBRO-DISCOVERY)

AN EXAMPLE: PRE-SCHOOL PROGRAMMING

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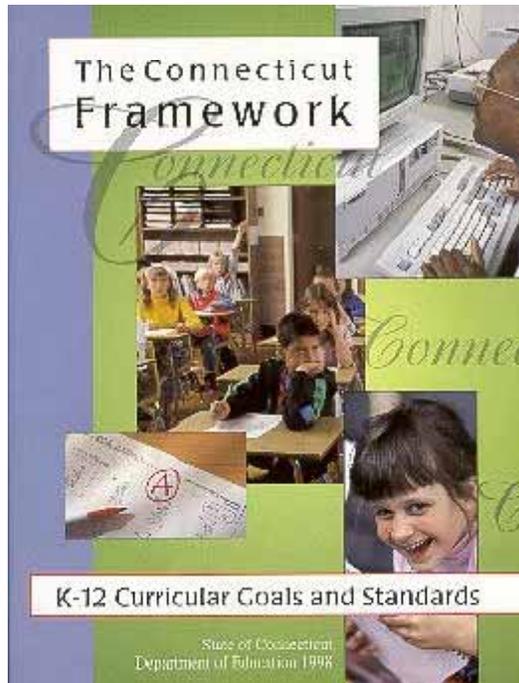
AN EXAMPLE: PRE-SCHOOL PROGRAMMING

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- AN EXAMPLE: PRE-SCHOOL PROGRAMMING
- CURIOUS GEORGE.
- Production Studio: Universal Animation Studios.
- Broadcaster: The Public Broadcasting System.
- An example of melding education and entertainment.
Using curriculum as part of the program guidelines.
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• : PBS
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- CURIOUS GEORGE HAS A CURRICULUM FOCUS ON: MATH / SCIENCE / ENGINEERING

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- CONNECTICUT: PRESCHOOL / K-12 CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK:

- Strand: Cognitive Development / Science / Technology-Engineering

- Program Goals (extracted from pre-K / K-12 curriculum framework)

- : / K-12

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demonstrate the ability to think, reason, question and remember:
engage in problem solving:

- use simple machines and materials

Content Standards

* Logical – Mathematical/Scientific Thinking (Engineering)

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- Preschool programs will provide children with opportunities to:
express wonder, ask questions and seek answers about the natural world;
 - recognize and solve problems through active exploration, including trial and error and interacting with peers and adults;
 - organize and express their understanding of common properties and attributes of things.

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- CURIOUS GEORGE – SEASON 2: Episode 11
(segment 1)
"The Fully Automatic Monkey Fun Hat"



An experiment

- BEAT BAND
- Who is the Audience?
- Which ratings category?
- If the show is for entertainment: 1 sample episodes
- If the show has educational components: 1 sample episode
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CONCLUSION

- Know your audience.
- Research the market.
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Thank You!
