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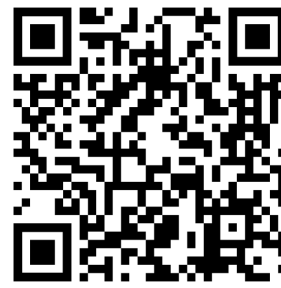
## Broadcasting and Social Change in Sixties Britain

What can audio-visual materials reveal about the 1960s?

Hannah Collis

Guided watching and listening  
Suggested sequence

# Watch the BBC's *Wild, Wild Women* (1969)



This is the only remaining episode of the 1969 sitcom *Wild, Wild Women*. The series was set years earlier, in 1902, so offers a good commentary on the advances of women in the first half of the twentieth century. Barbara Windsor stars as Millie, a Cockney lady who works in the milliner's (hat-making) shop.

1. At the beginning of the episode, the women demand a bonus for their work. When they are refused, they threaten strike action. In what ways is this reflective of the time at which it was *broadcast*?

2. Mr Harcourt (the boss) is presented as the villain throughout. He rants 'imagine, women striking!' and calls female enfranchisement 'the impossible dream'. What is the effect and intention of this?

3. Using your knowledge of the twentieth century, in what ways did female roles change between 1902 (when the programme was set) and 1969 (when it was produced)?

4. Identify and summarise the two examples of the sexualisation of the female workers.

5. Describe how the women behave in each case. What does this suggest about female empowerment?

6. What does this episode suggest about the way in which male attitudes towards women changed between 1902 (when the programme was set) and 1969 (when it was produced)?

7. Describe two aspects of the episode that encourage the idea of women being 'wild'. Based on your knowledge of 1960s culture and society, do you think that this was an accurate adjective? Explain your reasoning.

8. To discuss in class: How does the fact that this is a BBC sitcom affect its usefulness to you in analysing 1960s society?



# Listen to 'Under My Thumb' by the Rolling Stones (1966)



Under my thumb  
**The girl who once had me down**  
Under my thumb  
**The girl who once pushed me around**

It's down to me  
The difference in the clothes she wears  
Down to me, the change has come  
She's under my thumb

And ain't it the truth babe?

Under my thumb  
It's a squirmin' dog who's just had her day  
Under my thumb  
A girl who has just changed her ways

It's down to me  
Yes it is  
The way she does just what she's told down to me  
The change has come  
She's under my thumb  
Ah, ah, say it's alright

Under my thumb  
Is a Siamese cat of a girl  
Under my thumb  
She's the sweetest, hm, pet in the world

It's down to me  
The way she talks when she's spoken to  
Down to me, the change has come  
She's under my thumb  
Ah, take it easy babe  
Yeah

It's down to me, oh yeah  
The way she talks when she's spoken to  
Down to me, the change has come  
She's under my thumb  
Yeah, it feels alright

Under my thumb  
Her eyes are just kept to herself  
Under my thumb, well I  
I can still look at someone else

It's down to me, oh, that's what I said  
The way she talks when she's spoken to  
Down to me, the change has come  
She's under my thumb  
Say, it's alright

Take it easy babe  
Take it easy babe  
Feels alright  
Take it, take it easy babe

1. Read the lyrics and highlight all examples of the singer controlling/influencing his partner.

2. Verse one alludes to the idea that the woman was the original oppressor. What does this suggest about attitudes towards feminism at the time?

3. Underline all examples of the woman being compared to a pet (dehumanised). What does this suggest about attitudes towards women?

4. Circle all phrases where the singer is bragging that the woman's change of behaviour is because of his actions. What does this suggest about attitudes towards women?

5. What does this double standard suggest about attitudes towards women and sex at this time?



6. Does the song support/oppose the idea of changing gender roles in the 1960s? Write down three examples from the lyrics and explain each one.

7. Based on your knowledge of 1960s culture and society, is this song reflective of the wider attitudes towards women at this time? Why/not?

8. To discuss in class: How does the fact that this is a pop song affect its usefulness to you in analysing 1960s society?

## Watch the BBC's *24 Hours*: 'Equal Pay For Women' (1968)



*24 Hours* was a daily news programme that aired on BBC1 between 1965 and 1972. It focused on current affairs issues, including the campaign for equal pay for equal work spearheaded by Barbara Castle in the late 1960s.

1. Write down three facts about women's work from the introduction at the beginning of the clip.

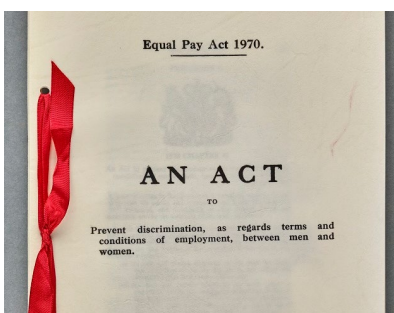
2. What is the difference between 'equal pay for equal work' and 'equal pay for work of equal value'?

3. Why do some interviewees argue that women should not be paid equally for work of equal value?

4. Why did some males argue that men and women should continue to have different jobs?

5. Write down any quotes/opinions that you found surprising in the clip.

6. What does this clip reveal about the extent of change in attitudes towards women by 1968?



7. The purpose of *24 Hours* was to critique and analyse current events and social issues. How does this suggest that the BBC saw its role in shaping social attitudes?

8. To discuss in class: How does the fact that this is a BBC news programme affect its usefulness to you in analysing 1960s society?

The song 'Brown Sugar' was a US number 1 hit for the Rolling Stones in 1971, reaching number 2 in the UK. It has remained a popular but controversial track, which has appeared in most of their set lists since then. However, the band reportedly retired the song in 2021.

1. Listen to the track once without paying attention to the lyrics. What feelings does the music evoke? (Consider style/tempo/ tone/etc.)

3. 'Brown sugar' is slang for an attractive Black woman. What does this suggest about attitudes towards women and Black people in Britain?

6. Verse three takes place in the present day and continues to refer to the sexual gratification of the singer by a Black woman. What does this suggest about attitudes towards women and Black people in Britain?

Gold Coast slave ship bound for cotton fields  
Sold in the market down in New Orleans  
Skydog slaver know he's doin' all right  
Hear him whip the women, just around midnight

Brown Sugar, how come you taste so good?  
Brown Sugar, just like a young girl should, oh no

Drums beatin' cold, English blood runs hot  
Lady of the house wonderin' when it's gonna stop  
House boy knows that he's doin' all right  
You should have heard him, just around midnight

Brown Sugar, how come you taste so good?  
Brown Sugar, just like a young girl should, yeah

Brown Sugar, how come you dance so good?  
Oh, got me quittin'  
Brown Sugar, just like a black girl should, yeah

Now, I bet your mama was a tent show queen  
And all her boyfriends were sweet 16  
I'm no schoolboy but I know what I like  
You should have heard them, just around midnight

Brown Sugar, how come you taste so good?  
Oh, no no  
Brown Sugar, just like a young girl should

I said, yeah, yeah, yeah, woo  
How come you, how come you dance so good?  
Yeah, yeah, yeah, woo  
Just like a, just like a black girl should  
Yeah, yeah, yeah, woo

2. Verse one alludes to the enslavement and rape of 2,000 African people in New Orleans. In what ways does this jar with the musical arrangement?

4. Read verse two; what evidence can you find that the singer is still singing about enslavement and rape? Highlight this.

5. Some people have suggested that 'brown sugar' could refer to the drug heroin. Reread the lyrics with this in mind. What does this suggest about the culture of the 1960s?

7. In 1995, Mick Jagger said, 'I never would write that song now.' Based on your knowledge of 1960s culture and society, highlight three lines that Jagger is referring to and explain how attitudes have changed.

8. To discuss in class: How does the fact that this is a pop song affect its usefulness to you in analysing 1960s society?



## Watch the BBC's *Till Death Us Do Part* (1974)



*Till Death Us Do Part* aired on the BBC for seven series between 1965 and 1975. The programme centres on the Garnett family, led by Alf Garnett, a right-wing, racist docker. Despite the intention to make Alf an anti-role model, many viewers found him likeable and the sitcom was extremely popular. This is one of the show's most controversial episodes, entitled 'Kevin O'Grady'. It contains racial slurs and language that is now considered inappropriate and offensive.

1. Throughout the episode, Alf Garnett repeats racial slurs and discriminatory remarks towards non-White people. Using your knowledge of 1960s culture and society, how accurately did this reflect public opinions towards race at the time?

2. Alf Garnett's opinions are sometimes challenged by his daughter and her husband. This represents a growing concern that older and younger generations had increasingly different views. Write down an example of this generation gap in the 1960s.

3. Why is the presentation of Kevin O'Grady (by Spike Milligan) problematic? What does this suggest about attitudes towards non-White people in Britain?

4. Which of Alf Garnett's racial stereotypes are reinforced by Kevin O'Grady when he tells them about himself in the pub? What is the effect of this?

5. The intention of this sitcom was to highlight the obscenity of racism and use comedy as a weapon to combat it. What does this suggest about how the BBC saw its role in shaping people's attitudes?

6. At the time of broadcast, *Till Death Us Do Part* was controversial, but not only as a result of the racial prejudice that it contained. Instead, Mary Whitehouse campaigned against the general vulgarity of the programme. Why would a modern audience have different concerns?



7. The intention of this sitcom was to highlight the obscenity of racism and use comedy as a weapon to combat it. Do you think that it achieved these aims? Explain your reasoning.

8. To discuss in class: How does the fact that this is a BBC sitcom affect its usefulness to you in analysing 1960s society?

# Watch the BBC's *Rainbow City* (1967)



*Rainbow City* was created and produced by John Elliot, a writer who had been approached by the BBC to create a series about the Caribbean community in Britain. Elliot collaborated with the Trinidadian actor Horace James to write the episodes. James was subsequently cast in the series.

1. The opening scenes feature several interactions between non-White people and White people living alongside each other in the city of Birmingham. How do these interactions contrast with each other?

2. *Rainbow City* was considered ground-breaking, as it was the first television programme to feature an inter-racial marriage. The main character, John Steele, was also depicted as a professional lawyer. What do you think would be the intention and impact of this?

3. In what ways does the depiction of non-White immigrants to Britain differ to other television programmes of this period? You could consider programmes such as *Till Death Us Do Part* or *The Black and White Minstrel Show*.

4. In what ways could *Rainbow City* be considered to show progressive attitudes towards race?

5. Using your knowledge of 1960s culture and society, write down three ways in which this programme reflected or challenged society's attitudes.

6. What does the programme highlight as the main issues facing immigrants in Britain?

7. *Rainbow City* was considered ground-breaking, as it included many non-White characters and actors throughout, rather than introducing them only when it was important to the plot. How does this suggest that the BBC saw its role in shaping social attitudes?

8. To discuss in class: How does the fact that this is a BBC drama affect its usefulness to you in analysing 1960s society?



## Listen to BBC 4's *Today Programme* (1966)



The *Today Programme*, a current affairs show, is broadcast on Radio 4, a station that traditionally serves an older audience.

1. Write down some of the questions/comments made by the interviewer. What attitudes are being presented towards the Sexual Offences Bill?

2. Leo Abse was the sponsor of the Sexual Offences Bill, which sought to decriminalise private homosexual acts. What do his comments suggest about his personal attitude towards homosexuality? Explain your answer with reference to the clip.



## Watch the *BBC News* reports (1994 and 1997)

3. What is the difference in the way in which homosexuality is presented between these news reports from the 1990s and the clip from the *Today Programme* in 1966? Support your answer with an example from the clips.



4. Consider the content of all three videos that you have watched so far. How far did public opinions and government attitudes towards homosexuality change between 1966 and 1997?

## Watch the *BBC News* report (2005)



5. What is the difference in tone between this news report and the previous clips? Write down two examples.

6. How far would you agree that Britain in 2005 had seen significant change since the 1960s in attitudes towards homosexuality? Explain your answer using examples from all four clips.

7. Based on your knowledge of 1960s culture and society, how significant was the Wolfenden Report in changing people's attitudes towards homosexuality?

8. To discuss in class: How does the fact that these are BBC radio and news reports affect their usefulness to you in analysing 1960s society?





*Man Alive* was a documentary series focused on current social and political affairs. It was broadcast on BBC2 between 1965 and 1981. These episodes from 1967 investigated attitudes towards homosexuality for men (episode 1) and women (episode 2).  
Watch one or both of the episodes here.



Watch *Man Alive: 'Consenting Adults: The Men'* (1967)

Watch *Man Alive: 'Consenting Adults: The Women'* (1967)

1. In the panel show discussion that followed these two reports, it was claimed that the report interviewers 'made no judgments and passed no opinions'. Find two quotes from the programme to prove or disprove this claim.

2. In the panel show discussion, it was emphasised that homosexuals were able to speak for themselves in the two reports, without 'expert' analysis on homosexuality. How does this suggest that the BBC saw its role in these clips?

3. What have you learnt from the report/s about the treatment of and attitudes towards homosexuality in 1960s society?

4. If you watched both reports, how did this treatment and attitude differ when referring to male and female homosexuality?

5. Do the reports support or oppose the suggestion that 1960s Britain was a 'permissive' and more liberal society? Explain your answer with reference to your own knowledge of 1960s culture and society.



6. To discuss in class: How does the fact that these are BBC documentaries affect their usefulness to you in analysing 1960s society?

## Challenge: Watch *Late Night Line-Up* (1967)



7. Following the reports, an 'expert' panel was interviewed about the contents. How do the attitudes of the panel add to your understanding of how people responded to homosexuality in the 1960s?

8. The BBC dedicated two programmes to report on the experiences of homosexuals and then constructed an 'expert' panel to analyse this in further detail. What does this suggest about how broadcasters viewed their role in society?

# Listen to 'Glad to be Gay' by Tom Robinson Band (1978)



This song is dedicated to the World Health Organization  
It's a medical song  
And it concerns a disease whose classification  
According to the International Classification of Diseases is 302.0

The British Police are the best in the world  
I don't believe one of these stories I've heard  
'Bout them raiding our pubs for no reason at all  
Lining the customers up by the wall  
Picking out people and knocking them down  
Resisting arrest as they're kicked on the ground  
Searching their houses and calling them queer  
I don't believe that sort of thing happens here

Sing if you're glad to be gay  
Sing if you're happy that way (hey)  
Sing if you're glad to be gay  
Sing if you're happy that way

Pictures of naked young women are fun  
In Titbits and Playboy, page three of The Sun  
There's no nudes in Gay News, our one magazine  
But they still find excuses to call it obscene  
Read how disgusting we are in the press  
The Telegraph, People and Sunday Express  
Molesters of children, corruptors of youth  
It's there in the paper, it must be the truth

Sing if you're glad to be gay  
Sing if you're happy that way (hey)  
Sing if you're glad to be gay  
Sing if you're happy that way

Don't try to kid us that if you're discreet  
You're perfectly safe as you walk down the street  
You don't have to mince or make bitchy remarks  
To get beaten unconscious and left in the dark  
I had a friend who was gentle and short  
He was lonely one evening, he went for a walk  
Queerbashers caught him, kicked in his teeth  
He was only hospitalised for a week  
(And he still bears the scars)

Sing if you're glad to be gay  
Sing if you're happy that way (hey)  
Sing if you're glad to be gay  
Sing if you're happy that way

And sit back and watch as they close down our clubs  
Arrest us for meeting and raid all our pubs  
Make sure your boyfriend's at least twenty-one  
So only your friends and your brothers get done  
Lie to your workmates, lie to your folks  
Put down the queens, tell anti-queer jokes  
Gay Lib's ridiculous, join their laughter  
'The buggers are legal now, what more are they after?'  
(Tell them)

Sing if you're glad to be gay  
Sing if you're happy that way (hey)  
(Cont.)

1. Do some research: What was Tom Robinson referring to here? What does this reveal about official attitudes towards homosexuality after the 1967 Sexual Offences Act?

2. Highlight all lyrics that describe how homosexuals were treated by the police, public or press.

3. Based on your knowledge of 1960s culture and society, is this song reflective of the wider attitudes towards homosexuality at the time? Why/not?

4. This song was written 19 years after the Wolfenden Report and nine years after the Sexual Offences Act. What does this suggest about the rate of change in society's attitudes towards homosexuality?

5. This song was originally written by Tom Robinson for the 1976 London Gay Pride Parade. How does this suggest that musicians saw their role in changing/commentating on societal attitudes?

6. When the song was officially released on an EP in 1978, it reached no. 18 in the UK Charts. However, BBC Radio 1 refused to broadcast it on their Top 40 Charts Show. What does this suggest about attitudes towards homosexuality?

7. This song has been rereleased and rewritten many times since 1976. Explore some of the alternative lyrics. What does this suggest about the role of music in shaping attitudes?



8. To discuss in class: How does the fact that this is a pop song affect its usefulness to you in analysing 1960s society?

