



## Sixth Form Entrance 2018

### HISTORY

1 hour

Please use the writing paper provided and write your name and present school clearly on all sheets of paper used.

## How Safe is Your Job?

In terms of home entertainment in the late 19th century and into the 20th century, the piano was the focus. Part of it was prosperity. As people got more disposable income, they spent it on things such as pianos. Pianos were aspirational and the United States was an aspirational country. And the aspiration of a piano was toward culture. There were hundreds of piano makers: Steinway came to New York because there were hundreds of these people. Being in the piano business in the 19th century must have been a lot like being in the software business in the 1990s or the dot-com business a few years later.

The peak of piano-making was in 1905 when 400,000 pianos were made. The party couldn't last. At the beginning of the 20th century, piano makers were being assaulted almost from all sides. In particular the phonograph, the record player. The phonograph was invented by Edison in 1877, but it isn't until 1915 that it really starts to compete with the piano. Edison's phonograph meant you could have music without tiresome lessons or hours of tedious practice. Music, which up until that point had to be generated by members of the family or friends, could now come into your home through a radio. You could get concert music in your home, and you didn't have to take any piano lessons.

In 1914, piano sales totaled \$56 million. That was more than double the sales of phonographs. Now in 1919, just five years later, sales of record players hit \$158 million. Radio soon eclipsed that... By World War I, pianos were no longer an essential element of every living room. By 1933, two-thirds of American homes had at least one radio. The Depression was hard on piano companies... Steinway tried to make gliders during World War II, they became a defence subcontractor. But then after the war, they couldn't use the wood that they still had on hand, because it had been there for too long in their lumber yard, so they ended up making coffins. Talk about a dying industry. Piano companies are making about 30,000 pianos a year: it was 32,000 in 2013. That's about 8% of peak production in 1905.

So that's terrible news, isn't it? At least for all the people involved in the piano industry. Sure it's terrible news. But wait a minute. What about all the people involved in the other industries that helped replace the piano? The musical recording and broadcasting industries, and all the composers and performers and arrangers who now had more reach because of the recording and broadcasting industries, to say nothing of the TV and film and internet industries that would follow. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, more than 200,000 Americans today work in radio and TV broadcasting, another 300,000 in motion-picture and sound recording, and nearly 100,000 in "electronic equipment repair and maintenance." What about all the people who consume that radio and TV and film – aren't they better off too than when the piano was the home entertainment centre? Sure they are. So let's see: as technologies and tastes change,

one kind of industry disappears, replaced by other kinds of industries – maybe with more jobs, but maybe with fewer jobs, where machines are doing the work that people used to do. Sound like anything we’re going through in this century? Welcome to capitalism, people — and, especially, the component of capitalism that a lot of people don’t like to think about: creative destruction. And how does that make you feel?<sup>1</sup>

### **America turns to TV in the 1950s**

The importance of television for the film industry during the 1950s cannot be overstated. The number of homes with TVs increased from 0.4 percent in 1948 to 55.7 percent in 1954 and to 83.2 percent four years later. It has been argued that television was the primary factor affecting the dramatic plunge in ticket sales, box-office receipts, and company profits in Hollywood between 1947 and 1957. However, the film industry's relationship with television in the fifties must be understood in the context of social and economic changes (suburbanization, changes in demographics, and consumer spending habits, changes in morals/sexuality, the invention of the teenager) and political tensions (McCarthyism and the Red Scare). The movies tried to adapt: the 1950s saw the first 3-D films and drive-in movie theatres. However, TV quickly became the leading advertising medium, with spending growing more than tenfold from \$12.3 million in 1949 to \$128 million in 1951, and nearly another tenfold to \$1 billion in 1955. In 1951, microwave transmitters enabled coast-to-coast broadcasts of live network programming, and in 1956 video recording made it possible to air pre-recorded commercials. By 1957, Americans were able to watch 450 stations across the U.S. on 37 million TV sets; by 1960, nearly 90% of households had a TV. (Adapted from Thomas Gale, *History of the American Cinema*, 1990)

### **Television creates a vast wasteland**

Even to its mildest critics, much of what was on the aptly nicknamed “chewing gum for the mind” was mindless junk. It was designed to sell products, it homogenized cultural tastes to the point of blandness, and it created feelings of inadequacy in some, who felt their real lives should compare with the insipidly happy characters they saw on shows like *Leave It to Beaver*. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) chairman Newton Minnow called it “a vast wasteland.” Nonetheless, it was a popular wasteland. And in 1954, the Toledo, Ohio water commissioner reported that water consumption surged at certain times because so many people were simultaneously using their toilets during commercial breaks on the most popular shows. Television was blamed for teenage tearaways, poor diet, obesity, illiteracy, divorce, racial tensions, violence and crime, changes in gender norms as well as the supposed decline in respect for elders, sexual morals, religion, and family and community spirit. People became obsessed by television. (Adapted from Steve Wiegand, *US History for Dummies* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed, 2014)

**Questions:** Spend 5-10 minutes reading and planning: Spend roughly 20 minutes on Question 1 and 30 minutes on Question 2.

1. “Technology creates more opportunities than it destroys.” Using the sources given, to what extent do you agree with this view? (20 marks)
2. “C20th Americans loved technological change but they often hated the social, economic and cultural changes that came with it.” Using the sources given, to what extent do you agree? (30 marks)

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from <http://freakonomics.com/2015/01/29/how-safe-is-your-job-full-transcript/>