

Lucille Ball Unit Study



Subjects:

Reading, Writing, Art of Comedy,
History



Teacher Instructions

Thank you for downloading our Lucille Ball Unit Study! It was created to use with a biography about Lucille Ball. Recommendations are made in the [blog post](#) that accompanies this printable. Here is what is included in the study:

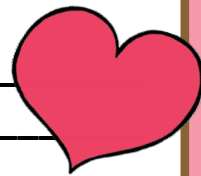
- Pages 3-11:** **A Biography of Lucille Ball:** Notetaking sheets to use while you read a book about her. (Includes answer key.)
- Pages 12-15:** **Timeline of Lucille Ball's Life:** Students may write on timeline or cut and glue events provided.
- Pages 13, 16:** **Compare Lucy's Comedy Styles:** Cut out the descriptions on page 13 and glue them on the Venn diagram on page 16 to compare the two comedy styles used in *I Love Lucy*. Answers on page 11.
- Pages 17-18:** **Show Biz Crossword Puzzle:** Fill in words related to show business during the time Lucy was working. Includes answer key.
- Pages 19-20:** **Breaking Barriers Writing Prompt:** Includes a graphic organizer for students to research and plan their thoughts before writing.

Also refer to our post, [Lucille Ball FREE Unit Study](#), for:

1. Videos about Lucille Ball and comedy.
2. Links to explore her work.
3. Virtual museum tours.

A Biography of Lucille Ball

Known For: _____



Birth: _____

Parents: _____

Childhood: _____



What was her teenage dream and how did she try to achieve it?

What are some jobs Lucy had?

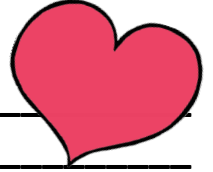
What was Lucy's big break?

Name: _____

A Biography of Lucille Ball page 2

How did Lucy get Goldwyn Studio's owner's attention?

What was Lucy's first acting role?



What were Lucy's strengths and weaknesses as a performer?

Why was Lucy known as Queen of the Bs?

How did Lucy meet her future husband Desi Arnaz?

Short biography of Desi Arnaz:



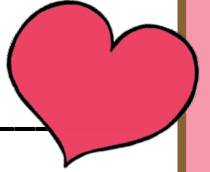
Name: _____

A Biography of Lucille Ball page 3

How did Lucy end up a redhead?

Who helped Lucy with her comedic skills?

What role of Lucy's caught the attention of CBS?



How did she convince CBS to hire Desi?

Who was in charge of the new show?

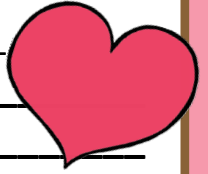


Short synopsis (summary) of the *I Love Lucy* show:

Name: _____

A Biography of Lucille Ball page 4

What was different about *I Love Lucy* compared to other TV shows of the time? _____



Lucy and Desi's first baby:

Did *I Love Lucy* become popular?

Give the synopsis of one episode of *I Love Lucy*:

How did Lucy's second pregnancy affect the show?



Lucy and Desi's second baby:

What happened to Lucy and Desi's marriage after *I Love Lucy* ended?


Name: _____

A Biography of Lucille Ball page 5

What two projects did Lucy act in after she and Desi divorced?

Lucy's second marriage:

What business venture did Lucy take on?



What project did Lucy act in after she sold her company?

Movie where Lucy played a serious role:

Lucy became known as the Queen of _____.

Lucy's death:

Name: _____

A Biography of Lucille Ball

Answer Key

Known For: One of America's first big TV stars.

Birth: Jamestown, NY on August 6th, 1911

Parents: Her father, Henry, worked as a telephone lineman and died when Lucille was three from typhoid fever. Lucy and her mother Dede moved in with Dede's parents.

Childhood: Some of Lucy's cousins also came to live at her grandparents and Lucy helped take care of them as she got older. She also enjoyed going to live vaudeville shows and silent movies. She worked many jobs as a teenager. She also cut her hair short and dressed like a 'flapper'.

What was her teenage dream and how did she try to achieve it?

She wanted to be an actress and did a six-week trial at a school in New York City but was not accepted.

What are some jobs Lucy had? Early jobs were selling hot dogs and ice cream. Later, she sold makeup and modeled at department stores. She appeared in ads for Chesterfield cigarettes.

What was Lucy's big break? An agent noticed her on the streets of New York City and asked her to go to Hollywood to do a screen test at Goldwyn Studios because another woman had dropped out at the last minute.

How did Lucy get Goldwyn Studio's owner's attention? She stuffed her bathing suit with toilet paper, gloves, and socks.

What was Lucy's first acting role? She had a non-speaking role in *Roman Scandals*.

What were Lucy's strengths and weaknesses as a performer?

Her strengths were being a clown including making faces and jokes and pretending to fall down. Her weaknesses were her singing and dancing. She was also good at being a 'drop gag' girl.

A Biography of Lucille Ball

Answer Key cont.

Why was Lucy known as Queen of the Bs? B movies were shorter movies that were shown at the theatre after a movie with big stars in it. Lucy was in many B movies.

How did Lucy meet her future husband Desi Arnaz? They starred together in the movie, *Too Many Girls*. When they first met, though, Lucille was in costume and looked like she had just been in a fight and Desi wasn't sure what to think of her.

Short biography of Desi Arnaz: Desi was born in Cuba and his father was the mayor of Santiago. When he was a teenager, his family moved to Florida and he needed to earn money and learn to speak English. He started playing guitar and drums in bands and then became a band leader. He eventually got jobs on Broadway and in Hollywood.

How did Lucy end up a redhead? Lucy was cast in her first big role at MGM and it was her first movie in color. The stylist dyed her hair "strawberry pink" so it would stand out on film and Lucy decided to keep it that way the rest of her life.

Who helped Lucy with her comedic skills? Buster Keaton, a comedian who starred in silent films. He taught Lucy tricks for doing 'screwball comedies'.

What role of Lucy's caught the attention of CBS?

Lucy was a housewife in the lead role of a radio comedy show called *My Favorite Husband*.

How did she convince CBS to hire Desi? She and Desi rehearsed an act with funny routines and songs and performed it at movie theaters before the films started. Audiences loved it.

Who was in charge of the new show? Lucy and Desi created their own company, Desilu Productions, to produce the new show.

A Biography of Lucille Ball

Answer Key cont.

Short synopsis (summary) of the *I Love Lucy* show:

A situation comedy starring a housewife and her husband who is a band leader in New York City. They live in an apartment building and are best friends with their neighbors.

What was different about *I Love Lucy* compared to other TV shows of the time? Most TV shows then were done live, but *I Love Lucy* was filmed like a movie with a live studio audience watching.

Lucy and Desi's first baby: Lucie Desiree Arnaz was born on July 17, 1951.

Did *I Love Lucy* become popular? Yes, within six months it became the highest rated show on TV. It was watched in 10,000,000 households a week.

Give the synopsis of one episode of *I Love Lucy*: Answers will vary.

How did Lucy's second pregnancy affect the show?

Her pregnancy became the first time a pregnancy was shown on television. The baby then became a character on the show.

Lucy and Desi's second baby: Desi Arnaz, Jr. was born on January 19, 1953.

What happened to Lucy and Desi's marriage after *I Love Lucy* ended?

They did not get along off the screen because Desi worked hard and then often went out at night while Lucy stayed home with the kids. Shortly after their show ended, they divorced.

What two projects did Lucy act in after she and Desi divorced? She appeared in a Broadway show, *Wildcat*, and then she starred in a new TV show, *The Lucy Show*.

Lucy's second marriage: Lucy married comedian, Gary Morton, on November 19, 1961.

A Biography of Lucille Ball

Answer Key cont.

What business venture did Lucy take on? She bought out Desi's share of Desilu Productions and became its president. She was the first woman to be the president of a major production company.

What project did Lucy act in after she sold her company? She starred in a new TV show with her children, *Here's Lucy*.

Movie where Lucy played a serious role: *Stone Pillow*

Lucy became known as the Queen of Television. (Queen of Comedy is also correct.)

Lucy's death: Lucy died of a heart attack on April 26, 1989.

Descriptions of Comedy Styles

Answer Key

Screwball Comedy: Highly exaggerated, ridiculous situations.; Makes use of slapstick or physical humor.; Characters are wacky.

Situation Comedy: Same characters carry over from episode to episode.; A conflict is resolved at the end of story.; Recorded with laughter which cues the viewer when to laugh.; Characters are often very different from each other and have been 'thrown together' into a circumstance.

Both: There is verbal sparring or witty dialogue.; Fast paced.

Events for the Timeline

1911 Lucille Ball born in Jamestown, NY.	Lucille Ball born in Jamestown, NY.
1926 Tried acting school in NYC.	Tried acting school in NYC.
1929 Started working as a model.	Started working as a model.
1933 Became a Chesterfield Girl.	Became a Chesterfield Girl.
1933 Moved to Hollywood.	Moved to Hollywood.
1934 Started working with RKO Studios.	Started working with RKO Studios.
1940 Met and married Desi Arnaz.	Met and married Desi Arnaz.
1948 Starred in radio show <i>My Favorite Husband</i> .	Starred in radio show <i>My Favorite Husband</i> .
1950 Founded Desilu Productions with Desi.	Founded Desilu Productions with Desi.
1951 <i>I Love Lucy</i> premiered.	<i>I Love Lucy</i> premiered.
1951 Daughter, Lucie Arnaz was born.	Daughter, Lucie Arnaz was born.
1953 Desi Arnaz, Jr. was born.	Desi Arnaz, Jr. was born.
1957 Final episode of <i>I Love Lucy</i> aired.	Final episode of <i>I Love Lucy</i> aired.
1960 Lucy and Desi divorced.	Lucy and Desi divorced.
1960 Acted in Broadway show, <i>Wildcat</i> .	Acted in Broadway show, <i>Wildcat</i> .
1961 Married Gary Morton.	Married Gary Morton.
1962 <i>The Lucy Show</i> premiered.	<i>The Lucy Show</i> premiered.
1962 Lucy became sole owner of Desilu Productions.	Lucy became sole owner of Desilu Productions.
1967 Lucy sold Desilu Productions.	Lucy sold Desilu Productions.
1968 <i>Here's Lucy</i> premiered.	<i>Here's Lucy</i> premiered.
1974 Starred in the movie, <i>Mame</i> .	Starred in the movie, <i>Mame</i> .
1984 Honored by the Museum of Broadcasting.	Honored by the Museum of Broadcasting.

Events for the Timeline

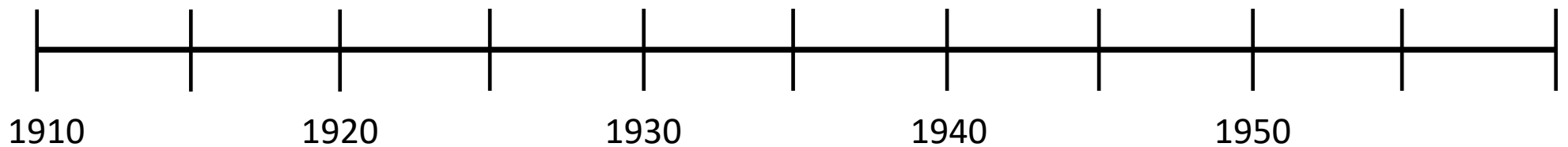
1984 Appeared in <i>Stone Pillow</i> .	Appeared in <i>Stone Pillow</i> .
1986 Desi Arnaz passed away.	Desi Arnaz passed away.
1989 Lucy passed away.	Lucy passed away.

Descriptions of Comedy Styles

Same characters carry over from episode to episode.
Highly exaggerated, ridiculous situations.
A conflict is resolved at the end of story.
Recorded with laughter which cues the viewer when to laugh.
Makes use of slapstick or physical humor.
There is verbal sparring or witty dialogue.
Characters are wacky.
Characters are often very different from each other and have been 'thrown together' into a circumstance.
Fast paced.

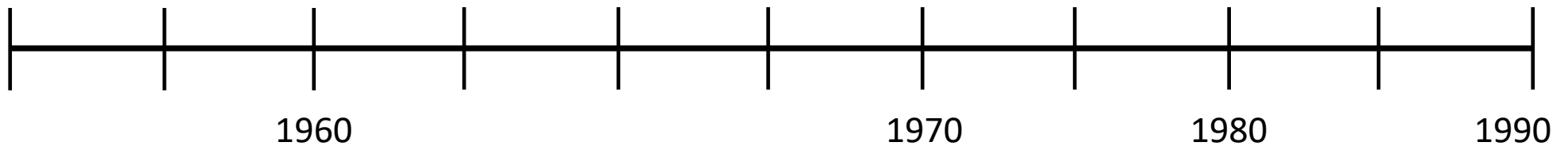
Timeline of Lucille Ball's Life

Cut out and glue the events where they go on the timeline and/or write in the events you want to include.



Timeline of Lucille Ball's Life

Cut out and glue the events where they go on the timeline and/or write in the events you want to include.



Compare Lucy's Comedy Styles

Lucy used screwball comedy techniques in *I Love Lucy*, which was a situation comedy. Cut out the descriptions of each type of comedy on page 13 and glue them with the style they match. If they match both styles glue them in the middle. When you are done, watch an episode of *I Love Lucy* and see if you can find examples of each description!

Answers are on page 11.

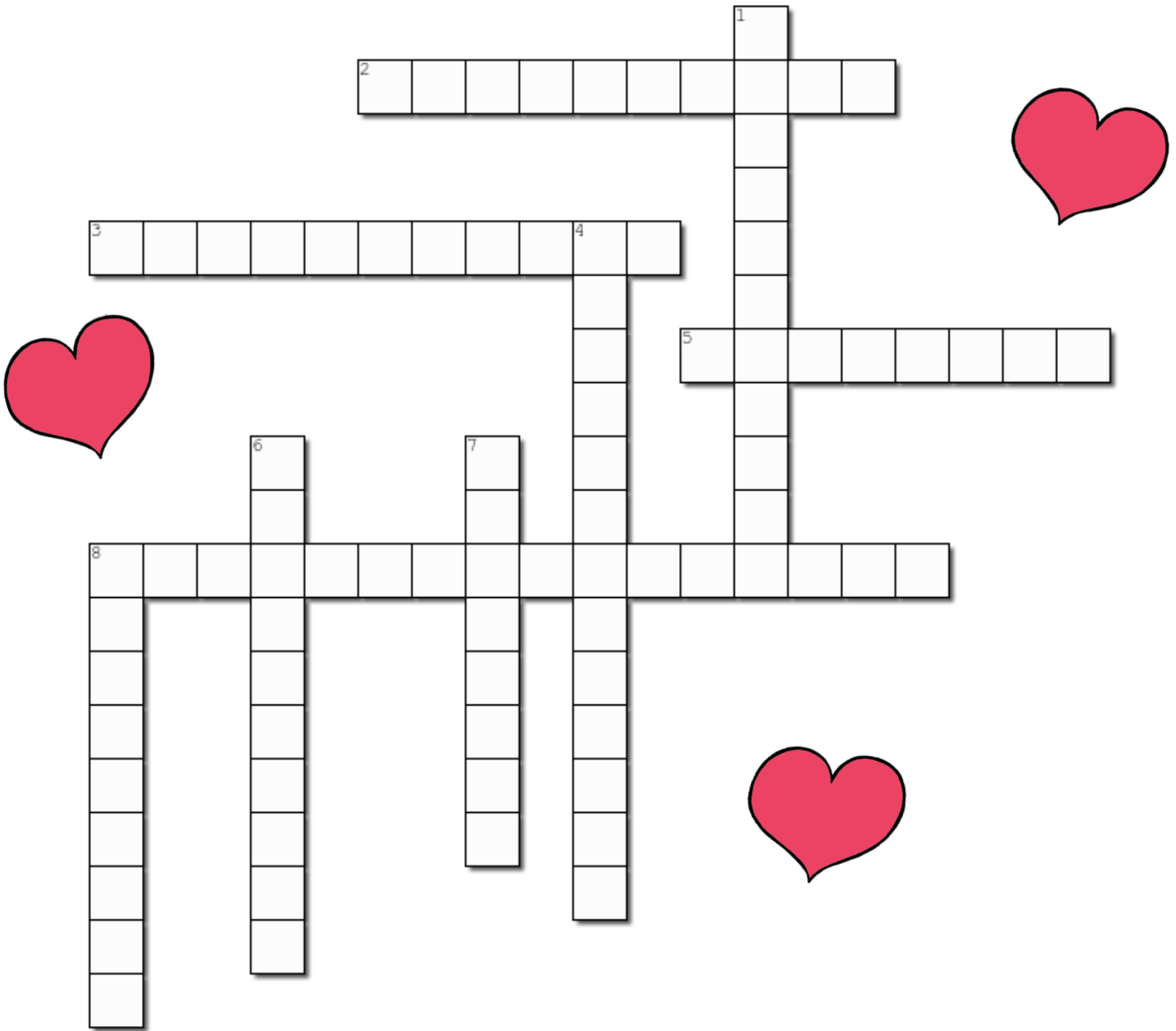
*Screwball
Comedy*

*Situation
Comedy*

Name: _____

Show Biz

Complete the crossword below with words related to show business.



Created using the Crossword Maker on TheTeachersCorner.net

Across

2. Type of company responsible for creating a TV show or movie.
3. An audition where an actor is filmed performing a script.
5. Short movies that were shown after the main feature.
8. TV show where the characters are involved in amusing situations in each show.

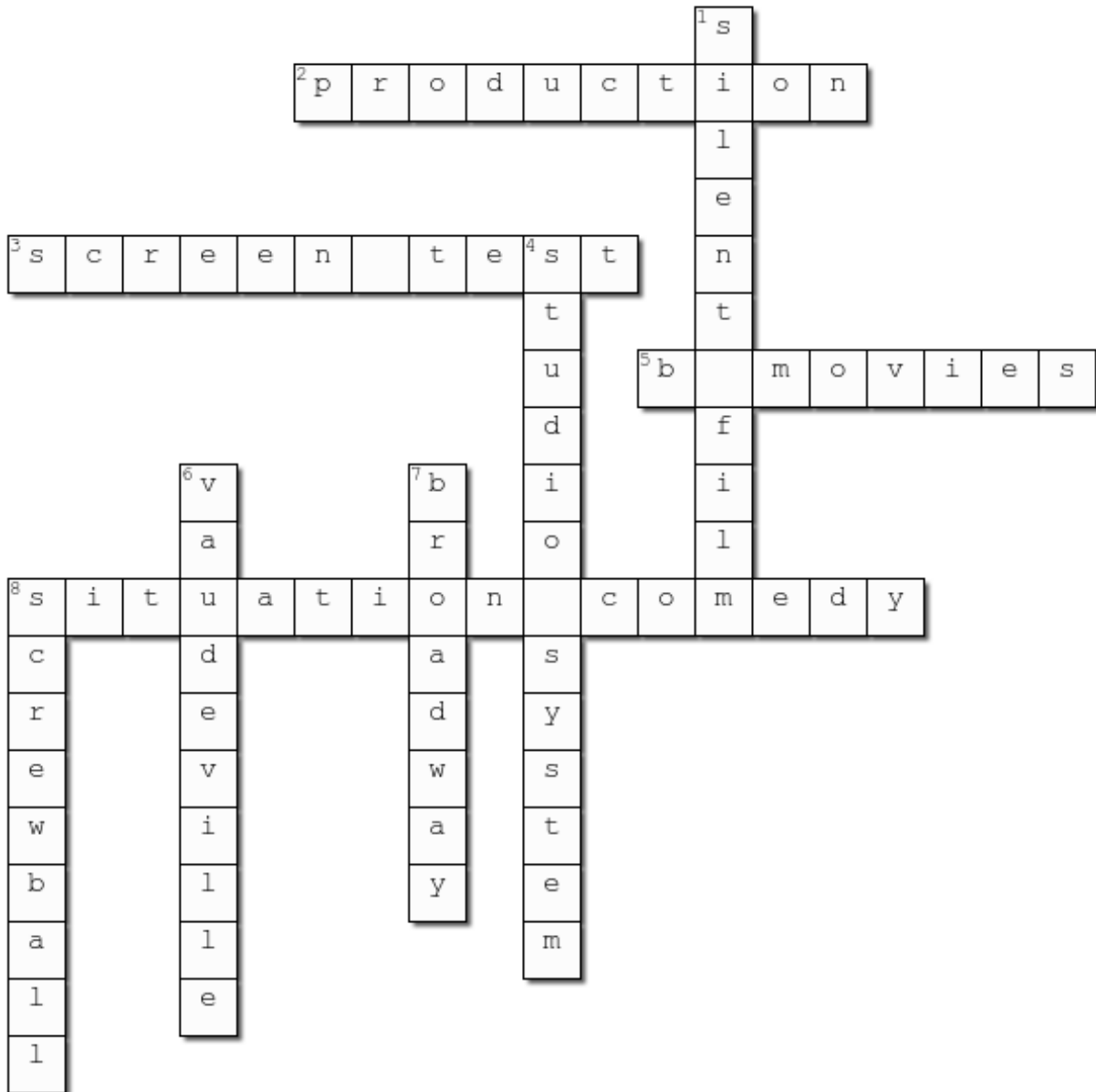
Down

1. A movie with no recorded sound.
4. Actors act in movies for one studio and receive a salary.
6. Live show with several acts including magicians, dancers, acrobats, etc.
7. The home of the American theatre industry.
8. Comedy with screwy plot twists, visual jokes, and sarcasm.

Name: _____

Show Biz

Complete the crossword below with words related to show business.



Created using the Crossword Maker on TheTeachersCorner.net

Across

2. Type of company responsible for creating a TV show or movie. (**production**)
3. An audition where an actor is filmed performing a script. (**screen test**)
5. Short movies that were shown after the main feature. (**b movies**)
8. TV show where the characters are involved in amusing situations in each show. (**situation comedy**)

Down

1. A movie with no recorded sound. (**silent film**)
4. Actors act in movies for one studio and receive a salary. (**studio system**)
6. Live show with several acts including magicians, dancers, acrobats, etc. (**vaudeville**)
7. The home of the American theatre industry. (**broadway**)
8. Comedy with screwy plot twists, visual jokes, and sarcasm. (**screwball**)



Graphic Organizer for Breaking Barriers



Lucy broke through societal barriers such as showing a multi-ethnic marriage on TV, appearing pregnant on TV and becoming the first female president of a major production company. Use the organizer below to gather your thoughts before you write the essay on the previous page.

Which barrier do you want to write about? (This will become your topic sentence.) _____

Why was this a big deal? Include some history: _____

How did this change things for the future? Give specific details:

Do you think these changes were positive? Why or why not?

Write a summary sentence to remind readers what this essay was about: _____



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