

Television and Media - Seinfeld, Much Ado About Nothing

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Seinfeld – Much Ado About Nothing

We like to label things in our culture. Those over the age of 65 are called senior citizens. Those under the age of 18 are called children. Anyone falling in between those ages are considered adults and there are certain expectations placed on that demographic. Adults are the backbone of society, responsible for basically just about everything. [Television](#) reflects that responsibility, as adults are usually portrayed as hard-working, career-oriented, and often married and raising children. With television reinforcing these expectations, many young people have probably felt that they need to grow into these roles and become responsible adults. A decade ago, however, NBC's sitcom Seinfeld debuted challenging these social preconceptions of what an adult should be.

Seinfeld's catch was that it was "a show about nothing." But the only real truth in that statement was that it was a show about nothing in particular; it was a situation comedy without a specific situation. What made the show unique and revolutionary was that it focused on the lives of four adults who were anything but what television and society itself

had taught us to expect adults to be. Jerry, George, [Elaine](#), and Kramer resembled more closely four children who never grew up, or never learned what it meant to be an adult. By the age of 40, none of them had spouses, children, or [serious](#) careers (I say 'serious' because Jerry did have a career, but it was very non-traditional—he was a standup comedian). Yet it can't be said that they were unfulfilled or less happy in their situations.

There may never have been an overt proclamation endorsing the lifestyle of these characters, but a life devoi...

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...eir behavior or attitudes should in no way be emulated. While the characters' ultimate fate could be seen as a reinforcement of social expectations, the lifestyle the characters live is portrayed in a positive context (after all, the callousness isn't a function of their singleness), and that is what is important in a society where alternative lifestyles aren't (or at least were not at the time) given equal time in entertainment and the media. The downside of Seinfeld is that its legacy has created an opposite, though equally negative situation in entertainment to that which it alleviated a decade ago: now the airwaves are dominated by shows about single people. Family sitcoms have fallen by the wayside. Perhaps one day there will be show that is equally appealing to all demographics. In the meantime, I suppose I can survive with reruns of a show about nothing.

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