

ENRICHMENT GUIDE

# NETWORK

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Adapted for the stage by Lee Hall  
Based on the Paddy Chayefsky film

ROYAL  
**MTC**  
MANITOBA THEATRE CENTRE

JOHN HIRSCH MAINSTAGE  
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# Network

## Enrichment Guide

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The Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre is proud to call Manitoba home. Royal MTC is located in Winnipeg on Treaty 1 land, the traditional territory of the Ininew, Anishinaabe and Dakota peoples, and the homeland of the Métis Nation. We are thankful for the benefits sharing this land has afforded us, and we are committed to the responsibilities of the Treaty. Hiy Hiy, Miigwetch, Wopida and Maarsii.

## The Role of the Audience

Theatre needs its audience! We are happy to have you here. Every staff person, actor, and crew member backstage plays an important part in your experience, and you also have a role in the experience of cast, crew and the people around you.

**Arrive Early:** Please make sure you give yourself enough time to find your seat before the performance starts. Latecomers may not be admitted to a performance. We ask schools and other groups to arrive at least 20-30 minutes before the show.

**Cell Phones and Other Electronic Devices:** Please **turn off** your cell phone/mp3 player /gaming system/camera/smart watch. Texting, surfing, and gaming during performances is very distracting for the performers and other audience members. Using cameras and recording devices during a performance is **never** allowed.

**Talking During the Performance:** Even when you whisper, you can be heard by performers and people around you. Unless it is a relaxed performance, disruptive patrons will be removed from the theatre. Please wait until after the performance to share your words with others.

**Food/Drinks:** Food and outside drinks are not allowed in the theatre. When there is an intermission, snacks and drinks may be available for purchase. There is complimentary water in the lobby.

**Dress:** There is no dress code at the Royal MTC, but we respectfully ask you not to wear hats in the theatre. We strive to be a scent-free environment and thank all patrons for their cooperation.

**Leaving During the Performance:** If you leave the theatre during a performance, you will be readmitted at the discretion of Front of House staff. If readmitted, you may be placed in an empty seat at the back of the auditorium instead of your original seat.

**Being Asked to Leave:** The theatre staff has, and will exercise, the right to ask any member of the audience to leave if that person is being inappropriate or disruptive including (but not limited to): talking, using devices that produce light or sound, and deliberately interfering with an actor or the performance (tripping, throwing items on or near the stage, etc.).

**Talkbacks:** A short question and answer period with the actors takes place after student matinees, first Tuesday evening shows, and some public matinees. While watching the show, make a mental note of questions to ask the actors about the production or life in the theatre. Our artists deserve to be treated with respect! It's okay to have a negative opinion, but this is your chance to ask questions and understand the performance or process, not to criticize. If you have a concern, see the house manager after the show and they will make sure your feedback gets to the appropriate Royal MTC staff.

**Enjoy the show:** Laugh, cry, gasp – responding to the performance is part of the nature of theatre! As you get involved in the story, try to balance your reactions with respecting the people around you. The curtain call is part of the performance too – it gives you a chance to thank all the artists for their hard work with applause, and for them to thank you for your attention. We all appreciate when you stay at your seat and join in the applause!

## **The Creators of *Network***

### **Paddy Chayefsky – Film screenwriter**

Paddy Chayefsky (1923-1981) was born in New York, and attended school in the Bronx. In his early life, he served in the military (WWII). He moved to Hollywood in 1947 hoping to become a screenwriter, and eventually succeeded. His film “Marty” written and produced in the early 50s, got an academy award for Best Picture, but struggled to find success with projects following it. In his personal life, it is said that he struggled with anger and underwent psychoanalysis to deal with it and his volatile behaviour for several years. In the late 60s he made a comeback with the film “Hospital” and then “Network”, both satirical, both earning him Academy Awards for screen writing. Politically he was actively concerned and vocal about anti-semitism in the US and wrote pro-Israel ads for the Anti-Defamation League in the early 1970s during the Yom Kippur War.

### **Lee Hall – Adapter**

Lee Hall was born in 1966 in England, and is still an active playwright and screenwriter. Hall participated in theatre from a young age, and studied English literature at the University of Cambridge. His early playwriting success came in 1997 with a broadcast of the radio play of “Spoonface Steinberg”, followed in 2000 by the film “Billy Elliot”, which he later adapted to the stage. Hall has been writer in Residence at the Royal Shakespeare Company at Live theatre, Newcastle Upon Tyne.

**Related Resource Links:** Broadway.com conducted an [interview with Lee Hall and Dave Itzkoff](#) during the show’s Broadway run about the story. Includes a video (6:36).

## Characters

Howard Beale – Nighttime news anchor at UBS

Harry Hunter – Associate Producer

Max Shumacher – Head of News

Louise – Max's wife

Frank Hackett – Station Executive

Edd Ruddy – Station Chairman

Diana Christensen – Director of Programming

Schlesinger – Programming researcher

Nelson Chaney – Station Executive

Jack Snowden – Another news presenter

Arthur Jensen – Head of the broadcasting service UBS

Director – Newscast director

Sheila – Production Assistant

Other newscast staff: floor manager, continuity announcer, technicians, secretary, warm-up guy, make-up artist

## Content Overview

**This section may contain spoilers.**

Strong language, gunshots. Mature content includes sexuality (a sex scene is portrayed onstage), discussion of suicide, and footage of a terrorist attack. There is a shooting depicted onstage. Sensory advisory for multiple screens.

### **A note on historical presentation of Anti-Arab and Anti-Muslim sentiments**

*Network* the film was released in 1976. At that time in the U.S. and Canada, anti-Arab and Anti-Muslim sentiment was beginning to build, especially around fears of Arab control of U.S. petroleum, oil and other commodities. In the screenplay, and this play adaptation, Howard Beale expresses these sentiments in a speech. While these are the sentiments of a fictional character, and reflect beliefs and prejudices of that time, we wish to acknowledge that these ideas can be hard to hear even in an historical context, and that these racist stereotypes have caused real harm to Arab and Muslim people. Sadly, many of these sentiments endure, and continue to cause harm to this day. As a team, we discussed this scene in rehearsal, supported team members as we worked through it, and consulted with individuals from the wider Middle Eastern community.

## Plot Summary

News anchor Howard Beale hasn't been pulling in the viewers and is going to be let go. Instead, he goes off-script and rouses the American people during a live broadcast. In the TV business, such a wildly defiant act can only mean one thing: ratings. So instead of losing his job, Howard is hailed as the 'prophet of the airwaves'. As Howard taps into the anxiety of society, his voice is joined by thousands. But is he a prophet or a puppet?

## Synopsis

**This section contains spoilers.**

A newsroom in the 1970s. Everyone prepares for that night's newscast. It seems chaotic but the crew is a well-oiled machine. Anchor Howard Beale delivers a newscast of Hearst kidnapping.

Following the broadcast, Howard and department head Max are drunk. Howard has just been fired. He pitches killing himself on air. Max and he note inevitable ratings bump and sarcastically pitch escalating sensationalist news shows. Max apologizes.

Back in the studio the next day, during Howard's report on attempted assassination of President Ford, the crew banter in the directors' booth, including a discussion between Associate Producer Harry and PA Sheila attesting she likes dating married men. Harry is so distracted by hitting on his PA that he doesn't notice Howard announcing his intention to kill himself on air on his final show, a week from now. Over the commercial break Howard and Harry fight about him remaining on air for the rest of the show. The fight turns physical and ends with the show being cut off, notably before the "Ron Neeson tag", a story about Iran, and a "terrorist report".

A number of broadcasts from other stations report on Howard's announcement. We then see Howard in a meeting with Max, Hackett, and Chaney, as they decide how to remove Howard gracefully from the building as well as from the show. There is tension between Hackett and Max over who has jurisdiction on the news program.

Max and Diana (from programming) are reviewing tape Diana has been given that includes a terrorist speaking about their beliefs and first person footage of a recent "massacre in Detroit". They discuss the ethics of airing it and whether it belongs on the news. Howard interrupts their discussion of whether or not it will save their struggling network to air content like this to request a chance for one more segment on air to make a statement and hand the show over to his replacement.



In the booth, the production staff of UBS discuss Howard's antics. Photo: Nanc Price

In stakeholders meeting Hackett presents a restructuring plan to put the news division under another umbrella in order to make it more fiscally accountable to the network. This would make Max's position redundant. He is blindsided and upset.

In the studio, Max gives Howard his request to sign off, despite Harry's protests. Howard apologizes and explains he has run out of bullshit. Harry and Hackett try to get him off air as he goes on, but Max and the studio team let him go for it.

Max meets with Ruddy and Chaney and is fired. Hackett says he would have kept him on despite the restructuring, but he shouldn't have granted Howard's request. No one likes Hackett but he is now taking over the news division.

Diana and her researcher are discussing ideas for new hour-long series to pitch, which is questionable ethically. She considers how popular Howard is and...

Diana pitches to Hackett putting Howard back on air. Despite his ranting ("articulating the popular rage"), he's getting a huge market share and she thinks she can turn it into a hit. When Hackett reminds her it's supposed to be a news show, she says turning him into a prophet type figure could generate revenue that could save the network. When Hackett is hesitant Diana talks him down to checking with legal before fighting the executives. He is fully aware this is ethically suspect.

When Hackett meets with Chaney, Chaney is very opposed, and Hackett suggests he can resign if he's against it. Hackett calls it an editorial section. Chaney doesn't want to be the one to tell Max, and Hackett shares that Max doesn't work there anymore; Harry is in charge of the news division now.

Max and Howard are packing up. The news team has gathered and Howard gives a farewell speech. He is interrupted by Harry coming to tell them that Howard is back on to do his "angry man thing". Turns out Harry has suggested that he and the news department won't stand for turning news into this, and Howard consults with Max about what he thinks. Max supports whatever he wants, and Howard is into it.

Ruddy goes to see Max as he gets ready to leave. Ruddy is not happy about it, but that he believes Hackett is going to end up on the wrong side of things. He asks Max to stay on to make sure that Ruddy has allies when it all goes bad and Max agrees.

Howard goes on the air and mentions all the top news stories with no detail, just his own disbelieving exclamations and opinions.

A week later, Max and Diana are watching in Max's office and it turns out the ratings aren't holding. She wants him to go farther, and tells Max she wants to give him writers

to work with for Howard's script. Max is disbelieving, but she points out the stories they cover aren't hitting any high standards anyways, and she can help bring their ratings up by treating it like a program. She says she is going to bring it up at the network meeting tomorrow but came to him first as a professional courtesy. He makes a joke about thinking she was there to see him. They flirt, but Max takes a hardline that the format didn't work and he is going to make the network change the show back to proper news. They end their conversation with more flirting and decide to go to dinner together.

Howard has a vision in the night and describes it on air the next day. He claims a voice told him to tell people the truth. Max in his office is trying to remember the name of the psychiatrist Howard went to when his wife died. Howard enters as they watch the end of the recording. Max expresses his concern for Howard, but Howard assures him he is fine and is not going off air. Max takes him home to keep an eye on him as a compromise.

At Max's house they discuss Howard going back to straight news again, and Howard calls it lying. Max and his wife Louise have a conversation where he dodges his wife's suspicions about where he was last night. While Max and Louise talk, Howard is visited again and wanders off.

At the studio the next day, Howard is still missing, and Hackett is not impressed. The show has blown up in popularity again. Max accuses Hackett and Diana of not caring about Howard's health, just about their ratings. When Max tries to make demands, Hackett tells him that it's Diana's show now. Ruddy has had a heart attack and while he recovers Hackett will be in charge of Network decisions. Max is fired. Again.

Howard returns to the studio at the last second, interrupting the intro of the show with a new rant. He's appalled by the state of the world, and he wants people to be angry. He doesn't have any answers to the problems he sees but he wants people to yell out their windows the iconic line "I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take it anymore". He says they first have to get mad, and then they'll figure out what to do. The station throws to their affiliates and discover that folks are yelling across the country. Even the crew in the studio is yelling.

At corporate, Hackett presents on the financial success of their division.

Diana speaks to the terrorists responsible for the Detroit massacre, pitching them a television series.





Jim Mezon as Howard Beale pontificates (Photo: Nanc Price)

Later, back in the studio, Howard now has an audience warm up act. His top story is that Ruddy has passed away. He monologues about the current generation and how they don't read, but just take their truth from television. He suggests that corporations controlling television means that the truth is gone from television. He suggests that if you want truth you have to go to your beliefs or yourself, because television is just telling you what you want to hear. He ends by telling everyone to turn off their TVs.

Diana and Max run into each other on the street. Max has been having a rough time. He is drinking too much and there is lingering distance between him and his wife. Max and Diana decide to get involved again. At dinner Diana tells Max about her successes and the networks legal battles over her show about terrorism. Diana and Max have sex, but Diana doesn't stop talking about her programming until she is dressed again.

On the air Howard talks about CCA being bought by agents for an unknown buyer, asserts that they are buying it for the "Arabs", and pitches a racist doom spiral about a future controlled by "mediaeval fanatics". He says everything is for sale on the global market and the rich are getting richer and are taking over. He demands his audience call and send telegrams to the White House to stop the deal.

Diana and Hackett discuss how Howard's latest speech against the Saudis led to the White House has being flooded with angry correspondence. Hackett believes that Howard will be fired in the morning. Diana points out that if they fire him, he will just get picked up by another network. Hackett angrily says he'll hire a hitman or kill Howard himself. The phone rings: Jensen, head of the network, wants to see Howard and Hackett.

Outside Jensen's office, Hackett tells Howard he better beg for mercy, but Howard is confident that the "power of television" is with him. In the office, Jensen gives a speech about how money makes the world go round, and how Howard is in over his head. Countries don't even exist to Jensen, only companies. He ends by pitching an end point of capitalism that sounds a lot like a benevolent dictatorship of capitalism – a "perfect world" without any ills, "one vast and ecumenical holding company for whom all men will work to serve a common profit." It's intense. Jensen has chosen Howard to preach this to the world. Howard seems converted by this speech, and it is apparent he is going to share this gospel next.

Max talks to Louise about his now months-long infidelity. He admits to the affair, and that he doesn't think he can stop. Louise tells him to go and not come home. He admits that he doesn't think Diana has any feelings, and that she sees the whole world like it's a tv show. They agree Max is in trouble.

Howard recants his assertions from the night before and shares Jensen's vision of the future where people are all just tiny nodes "in the grand, glorious Network."

Diana struggles with declining ratings and as she threatens Howard's agent with litigation, Max comes in. She is mad at him for not helping with Howard either. Max is tired of how unimportant he seems to her. He has visited his wife and she is struggling with depression. He asks Diana to understand how he feels and tells her he needs to know she loves him. She says she doesn't know how to do that.

Diana visits Jensen and explains that keeping Howard on is going to cost them. Jensen calls her old fashioned and assures her that the corporation has diversified to the point that they can carry the show. Hackett and Diana commiserate. Hackett suggests for a second time that they kill Howard, but this time the idea seems more serious.

At the show, the warmup guy does his regular intro. As Howard starts the show a man comes out of the audience, shoots him, and runs off. On screen is an image of Howard dying, but he walks to the audience and delivers a monologue about the danger of absolute beliefs, the importance of seeing people as human, and being committed to humanity over ideas.

## A Digital Design

*Information gathered by Josephine Hendrick for The Citadel Theatre*

Adapting a famous film about a television studio has paved the way for innovative multimedia design in theatre. The set designer for the Broadway run of *Network*, Jan Versweyveld, was praised for his “multidimensional designs, seeking to reimagine what a stage set can be and do,” by the *Architectural Digest* magazine. His incorporation of digital designs (conceived with the show’s director Ivo van Hove), have been called “part spectacle and part performance art.”

Now, for *Network*’s first post-Broadway run, we have a team of designers working to bring this show to life. This adaptation has two live camera operators filming footage to project on big screens, as well as pre-recorded footage that has been designed by videographer Hugh Conacher. Set and lighting designer Lorenzo Savoini says that the goal is for “reality and television to start to blur” for the audience as they watch the production. Sometimes monitors will show what people would see if they were watching their televisions at home, and other times it will focus on live feeds or follow actors off-stage to help advance the narrative.



Richard Young as Frank, Alanna Hawley Purvis as Diana, Alex Poch-Golden as Max. Photo: Nanc Price.

In addition to Conacher and Savoini, the creative team includes Dave Clarke (sound designer), Carmen Alatorre (costume designer), and Daryl Cloran (director). They worked on storyboards for *Network* for the last two years and have also experimented in the rehearsal hall integrating video and sound into the fast-paced script. “We are always showing the magic of how we build the world,” says Cloran, as he describes how a technician might double for a server as the show transitions to a scene in a bar.

The design team explains how close-up camera shots might show only the arm of a waiter with a tray on a big-screen, live they will see that the actor is still dressed as a technician with a headset. In this way, the design team can play with two realities, the one that we see on the monitors, and the one that we see in front of us. They are also keen to experiment with the way that a multimedia show can impact the viewers’ perceptions and feelings. Dave Clarke says that he is “using sound to manipulate how the audience thinks,” much like real news networks and television shows do. Similarly, costume designer, Carmen Alatorre, is using her design to transport us to the corporate world of the mid1970s. She has chosen colours, fabrics, and textures that show a characters’ arc or status, and that look good from far away as well as close-up on screen.

## Context and Related Resources

### Events of the 1970s

The film *Network* was released in 1976. Several significant events would have been taking place leading up to and during this time, and are referenced in the newscasts, including:

**Watergate Scandal** - In 1974, President Nixon resigned when faced with impeachment for his numerous abuses of power while in office and their subsequent cover ups, including the breaking at the Watergate building. He remains the only US president to resign. Some assert that this event led to the modern American distrust of government.

**Related Resource Links:** An [overview from Encyclopedia Britannica](#) has more details about the scandal; CNN hosts an [editorial about its lasting impact on the American psyche](#).

**Vietnam War** - In 1973, America ended direct involvement in the Vietnam war, after joining the conflict on the ground in earnest in 1964. America lost approximately 58,000 lives in the war, according to Britannica, and was a huge point of public tension.

Although it was set in and adapted from a novel depicting the Korean War, *MASH* (both the film and the television series) was widely recognized as a commentary on the Vietnam war. These pieces became hugely successful over the course of the 70s and into the early 80s.

The Vietnam War was also called “the first Television War” as the industry had evolved to the point of being able to produce news with footage from the frontlines, and many argue this footage and coverage were part of what negatively affected public support of the war.

**Related Resource Links:** Read about the [legacy of MASH](#) and [how media of the time dealt with the Vietnam War](#).

**OPEC Oil Embargo** – A complicated history led to a major energy crisis, rationing, and huge mark-up in the Western world in the 1970s and 80s. Land was annexed in the Israel-Arab war. Several neighbouring countries attempted to take this land back in the Yom Kippur war in 1973. The USA and other countries supported Israel at this time. In response to this American support, several countries on the other side of the conflict, representing a large percent of OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) quadrupled oil prices over a short period of time, and totally embargoed the United States, Denmark and the Netherlands.

The effects on the gas industry lasted into the early 80s, but also inspired innovation of alternative energy and the beginnings of fuel efficiency standards. [Read more about OPEC here](#).

**Occupation of Wounded Knee (1973)** - a months-long occupation and protest by some members of the Oglala Lakota peoples involved in the American Indian Movement (AIM). They were protesting in response to racism they faced in the areas surrounding the Pine Ridge reservation, and corruption and poor management within. A standoff between Federal marshals and National Guard ensued, with nightly exchanges of gunfire. Two of the occupiers were killed, and a marshal badly injured.

This was brought to the public's attention due to the 1973 Oscars. Marlon Brando was supposed to be receiving an award for best actor in *The Godfather*, but he instead sent Indigenous actor Sacheen Littlefeather to decline the award for him and use the time to raise awareness about the standoff as well as the "treatment of American Indians today by the film industry." She was booed by some attendees, threatened with violence, and mocked by other presenters. She received a formal apology for her treatment following this event nearly 50 years later, in August of 2022.

**Related Resource Links:** The Atlantic examines the [occupation at Wounded Knee](#), and Smithsonian Magazine recounts [Littlefeather's experience at the Oscars](#).

**Patty Hearst Kidnapping (1974)** - Hearst was a college student from a wealthy, powerful family when her apartment was broken into and she was kidnapped by a group calling themselves a Symbionese Liberation Army. An urban guerilla far-left group, they were considered to be the first terrorist organization on the American left by the FBI and law enforcement. She has said she was subject to torturous conditions. In a recording 2 months after her kidnapping, Hearst said she had joined the SLA. The group robbed a bank, and Hearst participated, though she later said it was not willingly and she joined the group due to Stockholm Syndrome. After her arrest in 1975 and a long trial, she was sentenced to 7 years in prison. She served 2 years, then her sentence was commuted by President Carter; later she was pardoned by President Clinton.

**Related Resource Links:** CNN's national security analyst wrote an [article about the 1970s as the golden age of terrorism](#) and the rise of several groups who committed domestic attacks similar to those referenced in the show.



The cast of *Network*. Photo: Nanc Price.

## Events of the 1970s in Canada

The National Film Board has curated a list of films capturing five important moments in Canadian history during the 1970s. [See the list here](#). The events are:

- Canada withdraws from IIHF international Hockey events over disagreement about whether pros could play ("Thunderbirds in China", 1 hour)
- The October Crisis: longstanding domestic terrorist group FLQ kidnaps a government official and a foreign dignitary leading to a months-long standoff between the group and the Canadian Government, including the unprecedented invocation of the War Measures Act during peacetime, and nearly 500 arrests. - ("Action: The October Crisis of 1970", 1.5 hours)
- Cigarette and Alcohol Advertising ends in Canada. This short, from 1973, mocks the "hypocrisy of cigarette advertising". ("King Size", 7 minutes) (note: whether or not this video works for a modern audience, or communicates its intended message could be a lesson in itself)
- The Oil Crisis of 1973 and subsequent development of the Alberta Oil Sands ("Riding the Tornado", 1 hour)
- The 1976 Olympics in Montreal (Games of the XXI Olympiad", 2 hours)

You can also find a [timeline of Canada in the 1970s](#) at timetoast.com.

## 1970s Television Broadcasting

From The Citadel Theatre

By 1965, 94 percent of American homes had television sets; by 1990, more than 98 percent had televisions, and more than one-half of all U.S. homes had more than one set. While professional sports, the movie industry, and radio have regained popularity, television continues to dominate home entertainment. By 1952, television broadcasts were reaching 15 million television sets in 64 cities. Although programming was in its infancy, the 1950s were considered to be the "golden age" of television.

The radio establishment helped pave the way for the new television network establishment; indeed the ownership of the new medium came essentially from the groups that had controlled pre-war radio. Television expanded far more rapidly than radio simply because it built on the existing radio structure. Thus television used radio program formats with added video, networks were operated along radio lines, the role of advertisers was never in doubt, and radio set makers learned to make television sets. With its rapid growth and more complicated organization, the overall pattern of expanding television was the same as existing radio. Compared to radio's initial impact on American society, television's effects on motion pictures, sports, and leisure patterns were felt in less than half the time. The new medium quickly dominated America's lifestyle.

As television was coming of age, so was television news. Just as the first programs came from radio, so did the first newscasters. Edward R. Murrow, who gained his reputation as a "newsman's newsman" for his coverage of Europe on CBS Radio during World War II, took his talent, and many of his colleagues, to television in the 1950s. Television newscasts were short and lacking in much film coverage in the early days. In September 1963, CBS expanded the network newscast from fifteen to thirty minutes.

The basic formula for the modern nightly network newscast is hardly changed from those days.

When President Kennedy was assassinated about two months after CBS and NBC went to a thirty-minute newscast, television devoted the next four days to live coverage of the nation in mourning. This brought television into a new age. People no longer relied on their newspapers; instead, they turned to television for information in a crisis.

### 1970s Pop Culture

On a lighter note, please enjoy any of these videos about the popular culture of the 70s. They are each 10-20 minutes, but easy to scrub through if you just want a taste!

1. ["If you grew up in the 1970s... you remember this - Life in America" by Recollection Road](#)
2. ["Remembering the 1970s!" by Rhetty for History](#)
3. ["1975 Commercials" by Peter Stahl](#)
4. ["Most Popular Toys of the 1970s" by Rhetty for History](#)
5. ["Strangest Toys of the 1970s" by Rhetty for History](#)
6. ["Classic Foods of the 1970s" by Rhetty for History](#)
7. ["Most Popular Song Each Month in the 70s" by Top Culture](#)
8. ["Top 10 70s Songs You Forgot Were Awesome" by DoYouRemember](#)
9. ["Forgotten Cars of the 70s by Boca Brothers Classic Cars](#)
10. ["1970s Things Found in Every Home" by Rhetty for History](#)
11. ["The 1970s Celebrity Scandals!" by Rhetty for History](#)



Alanna Hawley Purvis as Diana. Photo: Nanc Price.

## Glossary

**Affiliates** – Small media outlets that broadcast the programming of a larger network.

**CCA** – Acronym for Communications Corporation of America, the company that owns the network in the play (UBS). A company of this name was founded in 1989, after the original film script was written.

**Demographic** – in businesses such as media, demographic refers to the section of the audience population you are targeting using a particular aspect of their identity - such as age, income, gender, etc.

**FCC** – Federal Communications Commission: an independent agency of the US Federal government that regulates communications by radio, television, satellite, wire, and cable.

**Ratings vs Shares** – Ratings are a percentage that tell how many people are watching out of how many people could be watching in the country, whereas shares tell how many people are watching your program out of all the people actually watching television at the same time.

**Sensationalism** – the use of shocking or unexpected details in order to draw in

an audience, a common criticism in modern news.

**Sunday Night Disney** – Starting in 1954 with very few breaks, Disney has aired programming on Sunday night specifically, under different names. The timing was a much bigger deal when PVRs didn't exist. At the time of "Network," it would have been called "The Wonderful World of Disney". According to Wikipedia, the show's biggest competition came from *60 Minutes*.

**Telegram** – an old-time way to communicate. Like texting, but with morse code, and your message would be sent by someone else, and received by an operator before being given to the intended recipient. They were almost completely out of use by the time "Network" aired, but would have been familiar to Howard.

**The Mary Tyler Moore Show** - The Mary Tyler Moore Show, commonly known as Mary Tyler Moore, ran from 1970-1977 and was very popular and successful. It portrayed an unmarried, independent woman – not often depicted on television at the time – who had a career at a news station as an associate producer.



## Suggested Classroom Activities

### Before Seeing the Production

#### 1. The Power of Media

*Network* discusses the power of television over its audience and demonstrates how the media corporation's ideologies and goals can become mixed with message it is sending.

While social media platforms have become a go-between for network television news for many, social media also presented many of its own challenges of reliability of information, indoctrination of ideas, and easy avenues to spread misinformation with malicious intent. Consider this question with your class, taken from the Cinema as a Witness to Modern History Curriculum, written near the same time as these social media platforms were beginning:

Does the advent of "new media" mean the end of the domination of mass media by a few powerful corporations? For example, do entities such as YouTube, Google, etc. open up the work of communications to permit the free collaboration and exchange of ideas? (Cinema as Witness p94)

Given the current stage of Social Media integration, have we seen Google, Facebook and Youtube become more of a force than a traditional network like Fox News, CNN, or CTV?

#### 2. Representation in Media

Historically, television has not been great at telling diverse stories, and we can see that through **what** stories are told and **who** is telling the stories. *Network*, as a piece of media criticizing media, depicts a news network who turns to more and more sensationalism and commentary to drive ratings up and secure financial success at the expense of a factual news report. As the show progresses, an idea of a weekly show showcasing stories about terrorism from the point of view of terrorists starts off as a joke, but becomes a reality. Howard spouts racist rhetoric about "Arabs" throughout the piece, the network's criteria for success being tied to ratings, and not ethics or potential lawsuits.

- Watch the following clip in regards to Black representation in television:  
[https://www.instagram.com/reel/ChVhhwJIUfD/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_copy\\_link](https://www.instagram.com/reel/ChVhhwJIUfD/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link)
- Have students consider the information in the BBC article "[Viewpoint: Islamophobia has a long history in the US](#)" Many of us may be unaware of the long history of Islamophobia in America, and certainly our students may, as they were born after 9/11. At the time the film version of *Network* was made, America was struggling with lack of access to oil from the Middle East due to the OPEC Oil Embargo, fueling longstanding tensions.
- With the information from the above links in mind, discuss: how does popular opinion shape what we see on television and in media? How does media shape our opinions? What could be the result of overrepresentation of negative images of a specific culture?

- Watch part or all of novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's TedTalk, "[The Danger of a Single Story](#)" and ask students to consider what information they encounter in the media they consume about Middle Eastern Countries.

*Note: Care should be taken that Islamophobic or other racial stereotypes are not shared in a free-for-all, as this could be incredibly triggering for students connected to the affected communities. When considering the information they encounter, for example, they can reflect alone, or journal. It is also appropriate to give a warning that you will be discussing islamophobia and negative representation in the media before you begin, and letting students know an exit protocol if they are uncomfortable, as per your school's policies.*

Related Resource Links: The University of Chicago's Center for Middle Eastern Studies compiles research, lesson plans, and interactive info in [Media Representation, Negative Stereotypes, and Islamophobia](#). Included in the collection is [Mapping Islamophobia](#), interactive maps of reported Islamophobia and initiatives to counter it. The [Islamic Academy of Manitoba](#) also has compiled anti-Islamophobia resources.

- Ask students about what they are watching and if they know who is writing it! Have them consider the difference authorship makes in representation in media, be it books, television or film. For example, we are seeing a huge boom in shows and films told by diverse creators in their own words – Jordan Peele with *Get Out*, *Us*, and *Nope*; Donald Glover with *Atlanta*, and Indigenous projects like *Reservation Dogs* created by Sterlin Harjo and Taika Waititi and *Prey*, which includes a primarily Indigenous cast and Commanche/Blackfoot producer Jhane Myers. These pieces are cutting-edge and well-received!

### 3. Screen to Stage

Watch the movie *Network* (1976 – 2 hours, rated R) with your class prior to going to see the staged version. Have them predict elements of movie that may be different when presented on stage. Consider the following:

- Space in theatre transitions in front of the audience, rather than as a camera cut. How will that effect the locations of scenes or the pacing of the movie?
- Can you imagine or design a TV studio set for the stage? (Build a set model for extra credit!)
- Unlike adapting a book to a visual media, which usually requires cutting some of the material, this adaptation is being made from film to stage - both of which can have similar run times. What changes would you consider if you were going to put this on stage? Would you make any cuts? Change the order of events? Write down your ideas and hand them in to check in with after the show. Did Lee Hall make the same choices in this adaptation?

## After Seeing the Production

1. View a segment about [Tech Monopolies on Last Week Tonight with John Oliver](#) for background knowledge what the consequences are for markets with low competition. Then watch the segment on Sinclair Broadcast Group which discusses [local news and the influence of corporate talking points](#) on news media. (Videos each approximately 20 minutes.)

*Note: This content includes mature language. Second video opens with a newscast that uses a gun pointed at the camera to grab attention.*

After viewing, have students consider how a low-competition media landscape and the workplace portrayed in *Network* are similar and different. Considering the film *Network* was written in 1975, do you think the fear expressed in the play about the ability for networks to manipulate their audiences was justified? Why or why not?

Related Resource Link: From Web FX, this [infographic of the Big 6](#) refers to how six companies control most of the media we consume.

2. Have students read information about the [4 waves of feminism](#). Ask them to compare the feminism of the 2nd wave with the feminism of the 1990s and today (3rd and 4th wave). Then have them consider the women portrayed in the show in terms of 2nd wave feminism occurring at the time, particularly Max's wife, Louise, and his mistress and coworker, Diana. What can these women symbolize if we view the show through a historical lens, considering 2nd wave feminism? Given our understanding of modern 4th wave feminism, how do we feel about Max, Diana, and Louise? Finally, can and should we read anything into Max's final line, "You're a wasteland, Diana"?
3. There are two very different sentiments being thrown around as Howard and the Network face off around the sale of the network, but ultimately the show ends warning the audience against absolute beliefs. Reflect on Howard's final monologue. Do you agree with it? Can you refer to examples from the play that share this sentiment? Does it apply to anything you've experienced in your life?

"And so, Howard Beale became the only TV personality who died because of bad ratings. But here's the news: with all the benefit of hindsight: the thing we must be most afraid of is the destructive power of absolute beliefs - that we can know anything conclusively, absolutely - whether we are compelled to it by anger, fear, righteousness, injustice, indignation; As soon as you have ossified a belief, as soon as you start believing in the absolute, you stop believing in 'human beings', as tragic as they are... in all their complexity, their otherness, their intractable reality... The only total commitment any of us can have - is to other people... This is Howard Beale signing off for the very last time." (Hall, "Network")

## Curriculum Connections

Attending Royal MTC's production of *Network* and discussing it, or participating in activities, will fit into the following Manitoba curricula:

### Drama/Theatre

Creating: The learner generates, develops, and communicates ideas for creating drama/theatre.

- DR-CR1: The learner generates ideas from a variety of sources for creating drama/theatre.
- DR-CR2: The learner experiments with, develops, and uses ideas for creating drama/theatre.

Connecting: The learner develops understandings about the significance of the dramatic arts by making connections to various times, places, social groups, and cultures.

- DR-C1: The learner develops understandings about people and practices in the dramatic arts.
- DR-C2: The learner develops understanding about the influence and impact of the dramatic arts.
- DR-C3: The learner develops understanding about the roles, purposes, and meanings of the dramatic arts.

Responding: The learner uses critical reflection to inform drama/theatre learning and to develop agency and identity.

- DR-R3: The learner analyzes and interprets drama/ theatre experiences.
- DR-R4: The learner applies new understandings about drama/ theatre to construct identity and to act in transformative ways.

### English Language Arts (Senior 1 through 4)

From most recent drafts of the curriculum in development:

- Research and study topics and ideas
- Interpret and integrate information and ideas from multiple texts and sources
- Manage information and ideas
- Investigate complex moral and ethical issues and conflicts
- Contemplate the actions that can be taken, consider alternative viewpoints, and contribute other perspectives
- Become aware of and articulate the ways that one engages with the text
- Recognize, apply, and adapt rules and conventions

### Cinema as a Witness to Modern History

- Ideology and revolution
- Cinema and propaganda
- Oppression and resistance
- Social transformation and existential questions

## More Interesting Materials

**CTRL-F** - <http://ctrl-f.ca>

Canadian website with great resources explaining digital and media literacy topics including how to recognize bias in media, how to fact check, etc in videos, slide decks, and lesson plans.

If you don't want to sign up for access, you can also access their [CTRL-F YouTube Channel](#) featuring just their short video series (2-5 minutes) presenting media literacy tips and info in a variety of aesthetics appealing to grade 7-12 students.

**Media Smarts** - <http://mediasmarts.ca>

Canadian website featuring tons of content on digital and media literacy, including interactive content and lesson plans. Highly recommended is [#ForYou - Card Game for teens](#) that teaches about algorithms. PDF printable version is available, but there is also a link to order a free set of game cards.

**Last Week Tonight with John Oliver** Conspiracy Theory Segment (22:18) - <https://www.etonline.com/paul-rudd-john-cena-and-more-join-john-oliver-to-dispel-coronavirus-conspiracy-theories-149980>

A section on how to talk to folks who may believe in conspiracy theories begins at timestamp 17:30. Note that the “thetruetruetruth” website is no longer active.

**Sensationalism: Breaking News! Watch this Video Now!**

<https://academy4sc.org/video/sensationalism-breaking-news-watch-this-video-now/>

Video with full transcript of the history and continued presence of sensationalism in media, along with lesson plan and worksheet. Not too exciting, but a decently thorough explanation.

**NOPE.** (2022)

Written and Directed by Jordan Peele. Feature film that engages in the idea of the media industry and how it destroys people. Film is rated R. [Official trailer here.](#)

**“Network Got it Right: The Legacy of a Scorching Satire”**

<https://www.vanityfair.com/hollywood/2022/03/awards-insider-network-got-it-right-the-legacy-of-a-scorching-satire>

Vanity Fair Article discussion of the influence of “Network” on modern films.

## Mental Health Resources

*Network* addresses complicated feelings that are prevalent in our society. If these types of feelings are overwhelming for you, please access some of the following resources.

For immediate help in a mental health crisis:

**KLINIC Crisis Line:** Winnipeg 204-786-8686; toll-free Manitoba 1-888-322-3019 24/7

**Manitoba Suicide Prevention and Support Line:** 1-877-435-7170

**Manitoba Farm, Rural, and Northern Support Services:** 1-866-367-3276 24/7

**Hope for Wellness Indigenous Peoples Helpline:** 1-855-242-3310 24/7

**Winnipeg Crisis Stabilization Unit:** 204-940-3633 24/7

**Winnipeg Mobile Crisis Service:** 204-940-1781 24/7

**Winnipeg Youth Mobile Crisis Team:** 204-949-4777, 1-888-383-2776

**Seneca Warm Line:** 204-942-9276 (24/7)

**Kids Help Phone:** 1-800-668-6868 or text 686868 24/7

### Manitoba regional contacts and mental health services by region -

<https://www.gov.mb.ca/mh/mh/crisis.html> Crisis and non-crisis services

### KLINIC Community Health - <http://klinik.mb.ca>

Provides health care, counselling, and education as well as a crisis line for people of every age, background, ethnicity, gender identity, and socio-economic circumstance. Klinik's crisis line (number above) is open to people of all ages, genders and backgrounds. **You do not have to be in crisis or suicidal to call Klinik.** Calling the Crisis Lines can be a good place to start when trying to sort out a problem. Klinik can also refer you to other services or programs.

**Hope for Wellness Helpline** is available to all Indigenous people across Canada. Experienced and culturally competent counsellors are reachable by telephone and online chat 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Both telephone and online chat services are available in English and French. Telephone support is also available upon request in Cree; Ojibway (Anishinaabemowin) and Inuktitut. <https://www.hopeforwellness.ca/>

### Manitoba Suicide Prevention and Support - [www.reasonstolive.ca](http://www.reasonstolive.ca)

A project of Klinik Community Health, this website has resources for getting help, helping someone else, and dealing with loss as well as running a crisis and support line.

### Anxiety Disorders Association of Manitoba - <http://www.adam.mb.ca>

### Canadian Mental Health Association - <https://mbwpg.cmha.ca/?lang=2>

### Mood Disorders Association of Manitoba - <http://www.mooddordersmanitoba.ca>

Support groups, resources, education, and other services.

**Mental Health Education Resource Centre of Manitoba** - <http://www.mherc.mb.ca>

A provincial resource promoting the exchange of knowledge including reducing mental illness stigma. Electronic resources, an online catalogue and free library, and links to various specialized services within Manitoba and across Canada.

**MB Farm, Rural and Northern Support Services** besides the 24/7 number above, offers free, confidential, non-judgmental counselling and resources for anyone living on a Manitoba farm or in a rural or northern community. Live chat and resources online at <https://supportline.ca>

**Suicide Prevention, Education, Awareness, Knowledge** - <http://www.speak-out.ca>  
Material about depression and suicide for survivors and their loved ones. Not for those in immediate danger.

**Wellness Together Canada** - <https://www.wellnesstogether.ca/en-CA> offers free and virtual support related to mental health and substance use for anyone in Canada, 24/7.

**Mental Health America** - <https://www.mhanational.org/live-b4stage4>  
Information and tips on living a mentally healthy life, recovery and support for yourself, and others, and mental wellness tools.

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## **Enrichment Guide Contributor Biography**

“Oh hello there! I bet you’re wondering who Tala Gammon is. Tala Gammon is the worst kind of multitasker. You can find her roaming between the parks with her kids and dog. She also teaches Drama and English at St. John’s High School in Winnipeg. where she wishes her brilliant students would come to rehearsal on time.”

Tala has been writing guides for Royal MTC since 2018 and we are so grateful for her insights and research! Thank you, Tala!