



Watching M*A*S*H, Watching America: A Social History of the 1972-1983 Television Series

James H. Wittebols

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It has been said that *M*A*S*H* was a show set in the 1950s which reflected the shifting values of the 1970s and early 1980s. Hawkeye Pierce, Radar O'Reilly, Trapper John McIntyre, Sherman Potter, Margaret (Hot Lips) Houlihan, B.J. Hunnicutt, Frank Burns, Charles Emerson Winchester, Max Klinger--these and the many other characters who populated the MASH 4077 used the Korean War as a backdrop to comment on many of the social issues of their day.

Using a unique blend of comedy and drama, the show's first three seasons (1972-1975) focused on the anti-Vietnam War sentiment that consumed much of America. As Vietnam ended, *M*A*S*H* moved on to concentrate on other contemporary issues--the women's movement, the rise of the religious right in American politics, the new narcissism that marked the early 1980s, the heightened awareness of underage or excessive alcohol use, and the increased emphasis on family in American life. How the series presented these issues and its success in doing so are the subjects of this critical study. An episode listing--brief plot outline, casts and credits, air dates, and titles--is also provided.

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