

Watching TV is a very popular **pastime** in the UK. But what kind of programmes do British people like to watch? Well, the most-watched TV programmes every week are very popular dramas that are usually on at least four times every week. They are dramas based in one **neighbourhood** that try to **depict** ordinary life in the UK - we call these dramas 'soap operas' or 'soaps'.

In the early days of TV, there were often dramas on during the day. Back in those days, it was traditional for the husband to go out to work and for the wife to stay at home and look after the house and the children. Most of these daytime dramas were aimed at entertaining the **housewives** who would traditionally be at home, probably doing the washing. Companies selling **washing powder** would **advertise** their products at times when these dramas were on, and sometimes those companies would even **sponsor** the drama. **Hence the word 'soap'.**

So what about the word opera? Well, that's because these dramas are often **an exaggeration** of real life. They are supposed to represent ordinary lives but, to make them entertaining, lots of dramatic events, like murders, divorces, **affairs** etc., all happen probably much more regularly than they would in a normal **neighbourhood**.

Most soap operas these days are shown in the evening. Each show will have several different storylines happening **at once** that continue over several shows. The same **cast members** will appear in every show, too.

There are lots of different soaps on in the UK on different channels but there are three main popular ones. 'Coronation Street' has been on since 1960. **It is set in a suburb of Manchester and it's supposed to represent** working class life in the north of England. Then there's 'Eastenders' which started in 1985, set in the East End of London, and 'Emmerdale', which is set on a farm in Yorkshire, in the north of England. The BBC even has a soap opera to help you learn English - so if you want to experience one of these dramas in English, 'The Flatmates' would be a good place to start - go to [www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/flatmates](http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/flatmates).

## Glossary

<b>pastime</b> – what you do outside work for enjoyment, e.g. a hobby	<b>neighbourhood</b> – an area where people live rather than work or do shopping
<b>to depict</b> – to describe, to show, to represent	<b>housewives</b> – women who work at home, doing the cleaning, cooking, etc., and who usually have no other job
<b>washing powder</b> – laundry detergent; a cleaning substance in powder form used for washing clothes	<b>advertise</b> – show short television commercials to promote
<b>sponsor</b> – here, pay for filming	<b>hence the word ‘soap’</b> – this is how the word 'soap' became part of the expression
<b>an exaggeration</b> – showing or representing something in a more dramatic, serious or shocking way than it really is	<b>affairs</b> – here, intimate relations outside marriage
<b>at once</b> – here, simultaneously, at the same time	<b>cast members</b> – actors in a particular film or TV series
<b>it is set in a suburb of Manchester</b> – the action takes place in an area near Manchester (people from <b>suburbs</b> usually work in the city which they are close to, however there are usually very few or no businesses within a suburb itself)	<b>it’s supposed to represent</b> – the intention is to show; it's meant to show

### Read and listen to the story online:

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/newseenglish/britain/090127\\_soaps.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/newseenglish/britain/090127_soaps.shtml)

## 1. Reading Quiz

Are these sentences true or false? Or is the answer not given in the text? Circle the correct answer.

1. People don't like to watch TV in the UK.

**True / False / Not given**

2. The word 'soap' in 'soap opera' refers to washing powder used by housewives to do the washing.

**True / False / Not given**

3. The word 'opera' in 'soap opera' refers to the classical singing you hear in the dramas.

**True / False / Not given**

4. Soap operas have lots of continuing storylines happening over a few shows.

**True / False / Not given**

5. Coronation Street has been on British TV since 1985.

**True / False / Not given**

## 2. TV expressions: guess their meanings!

See if you can match these commonly used TV related expressions with the correct definition:

- |                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| 1. a couch potato  | a. someone who is always watching the TV (the telly) and can't live without it                                 |
| 2. reality TV      | b. another word for television   |
| 3. channel hopping | c. someone who sits on the sofa all day eating and watching TV   |
| 4. a telly addict  | d. TV programmes following real people in real life situations   |
| 5. the box         | e. going from channel to channel with the remote control (the remote) and being unable to decide what to watch |

Now try and complete the following sentences with one of the above TV expressions:

1. "\_\_\_\_\_ is boring. I can see people in real life situations every day – I would much rather watch a drama."
2. "What's on \_\_\_\_\_ tonight?"
3. My brother is such \_\_\_\_\_. All he does is sit at home and watch TV.
4. The problem with TV these days is that there are too many channels to choose from. I'm always \_\_\_\_\_ and I can never decide what to watch.
5. I love watching TV – I watch it all the time. I don't think I could live without it – I need to watch it for at least three hours every night. I'm such \_\_\_\_\_.

### 3. Wordsearch

Try to find the words associated with television in the puzzle below.

There are ten words to find. Words can be written horizontally (g), vertically (i) or diagonally (m)

p	r	o	g	r	a	m	m	e	f	z	t
a	g	h	t	e	l	j	d	w	e	o	e
o	d	u	s	m	b	a	e	c	i	m	l
c	a	s	s	o	a	p	p	h	e	u	l
d	e	p	i	t	e	d	r	a	m	a	y
e	i	u	c	e	o	q	l	n	t	a	a
p	r	o	g	s	z	r	e	n	i	o	u
i	g	i	a	n	w	p	y	e	a	s	d
c	a	s	t	d	f	k	v	l	s	r	r
t	s	a	d	f	p	v	e	o	i	a	h
e	e	n	w	x	t	r	t	s	a	n	e
t	o	o	a	d	v	e	r	t	i	s	e

remote	cast	channel	telly	depict	drama
programme	storyline	advertise	soap		

# Answers

## 1. Reading Quiz

1. People don't like to watch TV in the UK.  
**False**
2. The word 'soap' in 'soap opera' refers to washing powder used by housewives to do the washing.  
**True**
3. The word 'opera' in 'soap opera' refers to the classical singing you hear in the dramas.  
**False**
4. Soap operas have lots of continuing storylines happening over a few shows.  
**True**
5. Coronation Street has been on British TV since 1985.  
**False**

## 2. TV Expressions: guess their meanings!

Match the TV related expressions with the correct definition.

1. c
2. d
3. e
4. a
5. b

Now complete the following sentences with one of the above TV expressions.

1. "Reality TV is boring. I can see people in real life situations every day – I would much rather watch a drama."
2. "What's on **the box** tonight?"
3. My brother is such a **couch potato**. All he does is sit at home and watch TV.
4. The problem with TV these days is that there are too many channels to choose from. I'm always **channel hopping** and I can never decide what to watch.
5. I love watching TV – I watch it all the time. I don't think I could live without it – I need to watch it for at least three hours every night. I'm such a **telly addict**.

## 3. Wordsearch

p	r	o	g	r	a	m	m	e			t	
				e							e	
				m				c			l	
			s	o	a	p		h			l	
d				t		d	r	a	m	a	y	
e				e	o			n				
p						r		n				
i							y	e				
c	a	s	t					l				
t									i			
										n		
				a	d	v	e	r	t	i	s	e