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Throwback Thursday: American Family Watching Television, 1958

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American family watching television, 1958.

Source: [National Archives and Records Administration](#).

In the age of Instagram, Facebook and instant communication, photographs are becoming the preferred medium for sharing moments and documenting experience. Some people, like Peter Brook writes for Wired magazine, are saying [photography is the new universal language](#) and it's changing everything.

Photographs are like physical memories that capture the moment and thanks to digital, degradation (image loss) is not so much an issue anymore. While everyone is looking forward to what photography can provide and do for us in the future, I'm looking to the past.

Because everyone is sharing the moment (the reason why we share), we don't look at the

composition as we once did. Now, it seems when we look at a photograph, we try to reach for its feeling. But what is the photograph really telling us? The vantage point, depth of field, how the eye naturally travels when viewing a photograph and technical elements of photography are being adjusted to new technology standards and access. iPhones and lower costs to take and share pictures has changed the focus. Why was the photograph taken? What preparations were made? These questions and points of interest help shape context.

The photograph of the American family watching television in 1958 tells us about television but it also tells us about the perceptions of American life and family in the 1950s. The patriarchal family model of man controlling the TV with his son at his side; the notion of coming together around the TV as a family experience; the wintry church photo above the fireplace; even the crease where the two walls meet to symbolically define the mother's identity represents how women were the core of the household and marginalized in the 1950s. Every piece tells a story and reveals a little bit about who we are. It's OK to look forward and see what photography will bring to us, but it's also good to look back every now and then, too.

TV Introductions World Map

