



# Sesame Street and the Reform of Children's Television

*Robert W. Morrow*

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By the late 1960s more than a few critics of American culture groused about the condition of television programming and, in particular, the quality and content of television shows for children. In the eyes of the reform-minded, commercial television crassly exploited young viewers; its violence and tastelessness served no higher purpose than the bottom line.

The Children's Television Workshop (CTW)—and its fresh approach to writing and producing programs for kids—emerged from this growing concern. *Sesame Street*—CTW's flagship, hour-long show—aimed to demonstrate how television could help all preschoolers, including low-income urban children, prepare for first grade. In this engaging study Robert W. Morrow explores the origins and inner workings of CTW, how the workshop in New York scripted and designed *Sesame Street*, and how the show became both a model for network television as well as a thorn in its side.

Through extensive archival research and a systematic study of sample programs from *Sesame Street's* first ten seasons, Morrow tells the story of *Sesame Street's* creation; the ideas, techniques, organization, and funding behind it; its place in public discourse; and its ultimate and unfortunate failure as an agent of commercial television reform.

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