



## TED TURNER: TELEVISION PIONEER

### I. BEFORE YOU READ.

You are going to read an article about the television pioneer Ted Turner. Before you read, match the words from the text in A with their definitions in B.

A	B
pioneer	sending signals from a great distance
exclusive	publicising goods and services through the television, radio, newspapers etc.
unruly	mocked or criticised
advertising	person who is the first to do or achieve something
UHF	combining one company with another
diet	of a high status
beaming	difficult to control; disobedient
revolutionised	feature or characteristic which shows the quality of something
merging	things we consume
shareholding	ultra-high frequency; radio waves for broadcasting television and radio
hallmark	the amount of a company that somebody owns
derided	completely changed



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### 2. NOW READ THE ARTICLE AND ANSWER THE QUESTION BELOW.

#### MAN OF VISION

Robert Edward Turner III, the pioneer of cable and satellite television, was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1938. At McCallie, an exclusive school for boys in Chattanooga, Tennessee, he was an unruly pupil. At the Ivy League school, Brown University, he was asked to leave because he was caught in his room with a woman.

After university Turner married and went to work for his father's advertising company in the deep South town of Macon, Georgia. Like his father, he was a natural salesman. Turner's difficult relationship with his father came to a shocking end in 1963 when his father killed himself. At the age of twenty-four, Turner took over the family business.

Turner expanded into television in 1970 by taking over the UHF station Channel 17 in Georgia. It had low ratings. Turner fed viewers a diet of classic shows and black-and-white movies. Ratings shot up. Advertising revenue flooded in. In 1976 Turner introduced us to the non-traditional TV revolution by taking his UHF station nationwide, beaming its programmes down to the entire continental US via satellite well before Rupert Murdoch started Sky.

In 1980 Turner used the profits from his super channel to launch CNN (Cable News Network). The critics predicted failure for the 24-hour all-news network. Once again, Turner got a big audience. "I am the right man, in the right place, at the right time," he said. "Not me alone, but all the people who think the world can be brought together by telecommunications."

CNN revolutionised the news business as it grew. It cemented its reputation with its coverage of the first Gulf War when its broadcasters carried live coverage from the roofs of downtown Baghdad and, for the first time, audiences could watch fighting in real time – from the comfort of their armchairs.



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In 1996 Turner completed the biggest deal of his career, merging Turner Broadcasting Systems with Time-Warner. With 10 per cent of Time-Warner's stock, Turner had the largest single shareholding. He assumed the role of vice-chairman and took responsibility for Time-Warner's Cable Networks division, Home Box Office, Cinemax, and the company's interests in Comedy Central and Court TV.

When, in 2001, Time-Warner merged with internet superstar AOL, Turner became vice-chairman of that organisation. This precipitated a reverse in his fortunes. Almost immediately he found himself sidelined. He lost control of Turner Broadcasting. He was also involved in a divorce from Jane Fonda.

Worse followed a year later as AOL Time-Warner posted a record \$100 billion loss. Turner was forced to resign his posts in 2003.

As well as relentless drive, Turner's career is distinguished by an uncanny ability to relate to the public – to predict consumer demand. Another hallmark is a supreme confidence in his own vision. The best illustration is CNN. Critics derided the idea of non-stop news coverage. Now rolling news has become the norm the world over.

Adapted from 'Man of Vision Who Brought Live Gulf War Action to our Sitting-rooms', *Daily Telegraph*.



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Complete the information below with dates from the text.

### Key events in the life of Ted Turner

19\_\_ Born.

19\_\_ Turner's father kills himself and Turner takes over the family business.

19\_\_ Acquires the American ultra-high-frequency station Channel 17.

19\_\_ Channel 17 goes nationwide across US via satellite.

19\_\_ Cable News Network launched.

19\_\_ Turner Broadcasting Systems merges with Time-Warner.

20\_\_ Loses control of Turner Broadcasting after Time-Warner merges with AOL.

20\_\_ AOL Time-Warner posts \$100bn loss.

20\_\_ Resigns chairmanship of AOL Time-Warner.



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### 3. READ THE TEXT AGAIN.

Look at the sentences below and choose the correct word from the choices in *italics*.

- a. Turner was a *disobedient* / *well-behaved* student at school.
- b. Turner went to a university which was *not respected* / *prestigious*.
- c. Turner's father *was* / *wasn't* a very good salesman.
- d. Turner increased the numbers of viewers watching Channel 17 by broadcasting classic programmes and *recent* / *old* films.
- e. Rupert Murdoch started Sky TV *before* / *after* Turner broadcast via satellite in the US.
- f. The critics believed that a 24-hour all-news channel would be *unpopular* / *popular* with viewers.
- f. The merger between Time-Warner and AOL proved to be a *successful* / *unsuccessful* venture for Turner.
- h. Turner's self-confidence is one of his main *assets* / *weaknesses*.



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## 4. FIND PHRASES IN THE TEXT WHICH MEAN THE SAME AS THE FOLLOWING.

Example: .. born with the ability to sell products.. *a natural salesman*

.. gained control of the family-owned company.. .....

.. grew the business by moving into television.. .....

.. it had very few viewers.. .....

.. gained a lot of new viewers very quickly.. .....

.. generated a lot of income.. .....

.. strengthened its position of popularity.. .....

.. a change from good luck to bad luck.. .....

.. discovered that he was prevented from playing an important part.. .....

.. a motivation and desire to succeed which does not diminish.. .....



## **TED TURNER: TELEVISION PIONEER**

### **5. EXPRESSION.**

Turner was a pioneer of the modern television revolution. How have television and viewing habits in your country changed in recent years? What effects have these changes had on the choice of programmes available? And what have been the effects on the quality of programmes? Give examples to illustrate your opinions.