**"soap opera"**

(Adapted from Wikipedia)

The soap opera form first developed on US [radio](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radio) in the [1920s](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1920s), and expanded into [television](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Television) starting in the [1940s](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1940s), and is normally shown during the daytime, hence the alternative name, **daytime drama**. The first concerted effort to air continuing drama occurred in [1946](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1946) on the [DuMont](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/DuMont_Television_Network) television series [**Faraway Hill**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Faraway_Hill). Soap operas, in their present format, were introduced to television in [1949](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1949). Two long-running soaps, [**Search for Tomorrow**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Search_for_Tomorrow) and [**Love of Life**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Love_of_Life), first started broadcasts in [1951](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1951).

The term "**soap opera**" originated from the fact that when these **serial dramas** were aired on daytime radio, the commercials aired during the shows were largely aimed at [housewives](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homemaker). Many of the products sold during these commercials were laundry and cleaning items. This specific type of radio drama came to be associated with these particular commercials, and this gave rise to the term "[soap](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soap) [opera](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opera)" — a [melodramatic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melodrama) story that aired commercials for soap products. Though soap operas are still sponsored by companies such as [Procter & Gamble](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Procter_&_Gamble), the diverse demographic groups that soap operas attract have caused other advertisements for such things as acne medication and birth control, appealing to a much younger audience.

Most soaps follow the lives of a group of characters who live or work in a particular place. The storylines follow the day-to-day lives of these characters, who seem similar to ordinary people on the street — except that soap opera characters are usually more handsome, beautiful, seductive, and rich than the typical person watching the TV show. Soap operas take everyday, ordinary lives and exaggerate them to a degree where they are still plausible, yet are more dramatic.

**Romances, secret relationships, extra-marital affairs, and genuine love** has been the basis for the vast majority of soap operas. The most memorable soap opera characters, and the most compelling and popular storylines, have usually involved a romance between two characters, of the sort often presented in paperback [romance novels](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romance_novel). Soap opera storylines weave intricate, convoluted, sometimes confusing tales of characters who have affairs, meet mysterious strangers and fall in love, are swept off their feet by dashing (yet treacherous) lovers, sneak behind their lovers' backs, and engage in other forms of adultery that keep their audiences returning to find out who is sleeping with whom, who has betrayed whom, who is having a baby, who is related to each other, and so on.

Remarkable (sometimes unbelievable) coincidences are used to enhance the drama in most soap operas. For example, if a young woman in a soap secretly has a single sexual encounter with her boyfriend back in high school, this forbidden affair will certainly come back to haunt her several years later...usually at the very moment that it would cause the most harm (such as on the day of her wedding). Previously-unknown (and often [evil](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evil_twin)) [twins](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twin) regularly emerge, and unexpected calamities disrupt [weddings](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wedding) with unusual frequency. Much like [comic books](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comic_books)—another popular form of **linear** [**storytelling**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Storytelling)—a character's [death](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death) is not guaranteed to be permanent without an on-camera [corpse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corpse), and sometimes not even then.