

# American MASTERS

20  
years

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press information

*Walter Cronkite quote sheet*

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## AMERICAN MASTERS Walter Cronkite: Witness to History

*If there is one word that encapsulates Walter Cronkite it might be “respect.” In AMERICAN MASTERS Walter Cronkite: Witness to History those who know the newsman best share their favorite stories and recollections, offering the universally-held belief that he was the best anchorman of his time and, perhaps, of all time. The documentary premieres Wednesday, July 26 at 9 p.m. (ET) on PBS. Below, comments from friends and colleagues featured in the film:*

### **Ben Bradlee, former executive editor, The Washington Post**

Above all, he stood out for his authority. If Cronkite said it, it had a different aura about it than just any guy yakking away at a microphone.

### **Sir David Frost, author, TV host**

I remember saying once that television is an invention by which you can be entertained in your living room by people you wouldn't have in your house. Well, the exception to that would be certainly Walter Cronkite.

### **David Halberstam, author**

Most Americans really learned of the Evening News and learned of Vietnam and learned of the Civil Rights movement and learned of Watergate with Walter Cronkite as the man who ushered it into their homes. And he did it with great professionalism over a very long time and was, I think, absolutely

-more-

true to himself. I mean, it's one of those things that really worked. Right man. Right place. Right time. Right instrument.

**Don Hewitt, executive producer, CBS News**

If you ask me to explain what made a Walter Cronkite a Walter Cronkite, I can't tell you. I don't know. What made a Spencer Tracy a Spencer Tracy, you know? A John Wayne? A Gary Cooper? They just are. And to try to decipher it is almost impossible.

Cronkite made it well known that he was going to cover Watergate and you have to be as powerful a personality as Walter is to challenge the network. You know, most guys can't do that. He could. Just like Murrow convinced Bill Paley that he wanted to take on Joe McCarthy, Walter convinced Bill Paley that he wanted to take on Watergate, and he did.

**Molly Ivins, columnist**

In some ways, Cronkite's position is already a cliché, and I should think that the people in television journalism would get awfully tired of hearing it, but there was a time when CBS was the Tiffany of the three networks, particularly its news programs.

**Jack Laurence, CBS News correspondent, 1965-1977**

Walter Cronkite was really a kind of symbol. Not of the establishment, not of the journalistic community, not of politics as usual or even of the revolutionary cause. Walter was there as a symbol of the American people.

We all felt the sudden loss of our president in strongly emotional ways. That Walter validated by showing them himself. So if you were alone in front of a TV set, wherever you were in the country, watching Walter react, you knew that it was okay to feel the same way yourself. And that was a great service.

**Sidney Lumet, former director, *You Are There*; feature film director**

He seemed to me incorruptible, in a profession that was easily corruptible.

**Sen. John McCain, Republican, Arizona**

One of the moments that will stand out in history was the not anecdotal story after the Tet offensive when Walter Cronkite had gone to Vietnam and said over national television that he didn't believe there was a role for U.S. troops in Vietnam any more. Lyndon Johnson was watching and reportedly said, after watching Walter say that, "Well, that's the end of the war," and snapped off the television set. That's a testimonial to the incredible influence that Walter Cronkite had with the American people and Lyndon Johnson, the consummate politician, recognized that.

When you think about it, it's remarkable this one individual would be viewed the most trusted person in America for a long period of American history.

**Bill Moyers, journalist**

When I look back at that report that he did that is now credited with changing the perception of the country toward the war in Vietnam, it wasn't radical, it wasn't ideological. It wasn't opinion, it was the conclusion to which the evidence was leading many people, print reporters, writers, analysts, military. But Walter was there with a stage on which to state his conclusion. And when he did it sent ripples far and wide.

**Andy Rooney, *60 Minutes* commentator**

His great talent was he went right down the middle of a story. In other words, he wasn't trying to sell anything. He wasn't trying to influence anybody's thinking. He was just trying to give people the facts. And he did a great job of it.

He made a huge contribution. He established the standards to which everybody in the news

business aspires...He typifies all the best of what television news should be and no longer is.

**Helen Thomas, *Hearst Newspapers* columnist**

I think that he represented the best in America. That you always had this sense, this is a true American.

**Barbara Walters, *ABC News* correspondent, *hostess of The View***

I don't think any anchor again will have that kind of power.

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