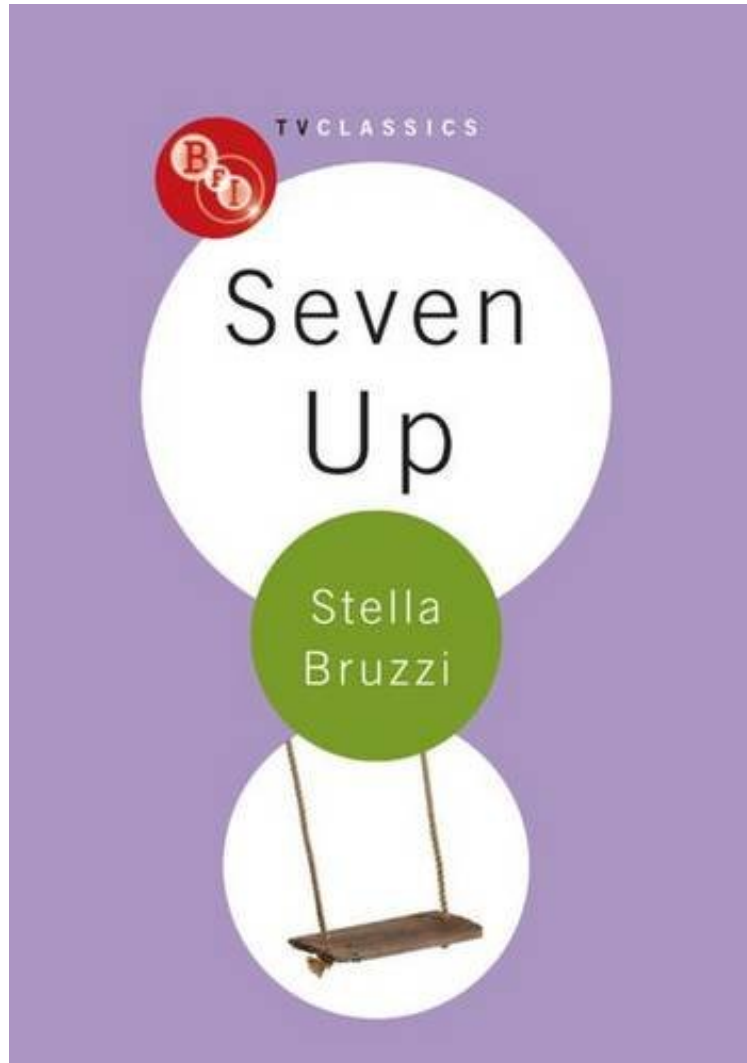


Seven Up (BFI TV Classics)

Stella Bruzzi

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Stella Bruzzi : Seven Up (BFI TV Classics) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Seven Up (BFI TV Classics):

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. 49 and CountingBy takingadayoffThe Up Series debuted in 1964 in Great Britain as a single episode in a series called World in Action. World in Action was a bit like the PBS Frontline series, taking a sometimes critical look at social conditions. The idea of the episode titled Seven Up! was to look at a group of seven-year-olds from different backgrounds to see if their social status determined what their places in society would be. Although the episode invited viewers to reflect on whether social class would dictate the roles the children would hold by the year 2000, it also strongly suggested that the answer was 'yes'. Seven years later two of the

original producers wondered idly what had happened to the children and realized it would make a good follow up program. The seven-year-olds are now in their fifties and there has been a new episode following their progress every seven years since. The original question about social class became obsolete over time, but the series continued to be fascinating nonetheless. *Seven Up* by Professor of Film and Television Studies Stella Bruzzi is a short study of the series. Only 121 pages including notes, bibliography, and photographs, it covers a surprising amount of ground. Bruzzi begins with a concise and entertaining history of British documentaries, which are often about ordinary lives and have an implicit social message. Bruzzi interviewed director and producer Michael Apted several times, and also interviewed producer Claire Lewis, as well as several of the 'children'. From these interviews we learn some interesting trivia, such as that Apted did not want the series aired in America because Americans wouldn't understand the social class angle. The first episode that aired in the U.S. was *28 Up*. It was an immediate hit. In fact, the entire series (so far) is available on DVD in the States, but not yet in Britain. What Apted may have been slow to realize is that the series ceased to be about social class and became a bit harder to pigeonhole. As time went on it became obvious that the "study" neglected important variables such as the children's parents and that the sample in any case was too small to draw any conclusions from. Viewers would have been justified in wondering if they were watching a social history or just a soap opera. After all, none of the participants had done anything remarkable, they were all rather ordinary people except that every seven years they spent several days being filmed talking about their ordinary lives so that people all over the world could see how they were getting on. Is this what reality TV is all about - that just being on TV can make ordinary people fascinating? Bruzzi deconstructs the series in a very accessible style. She points out changes in the way the episodes have been edited and the evolving roles Apted and Lewis have played as interviewers. She examines the way the 'children' have become more involved - rather than act as passive lab rats, they participate on their own terms, if they decide to participate at all. Like so much TV, what you take away from the series depends a lot on what you bring to it. It's possible to just catch up on the participants' lives, but if you want to dig a little deeper, there's plenty of material there. Bruzzi concludes the book by observing that the original episode "'Seven Up!' might not ultimately have delivered a glimpse into Britain's future, but the subsequent series has given an unmatched glimpse into its collective past."

Seven Up was made as a one-off documentary by Granada's flagship current affairs series "World in Action" in 1964. It featured fourteen seven-year-olds who were interviewed about their lives and what they wanted to be when they grew up. The children were selected to provide a representative cross-section of British society, and the program's intention was to test the Jesuit maxim - "give me a child until he is seven and I will give you the man" - in the context of the British belief in the overriding and determining importance of class origins. The series developed into subsequent programs, filmed at seven-year intervals, the most recent being *"49 Up"*, "broadcast in 2005.

From the Back Cover *Seven Up* was made as a one-off documentary by Granada's flagship current affairs series "World in Action" in 1964. It featured fourteen seven-year-olds who were interviewed about their lives and what they wanted to be when they grew up. The children were selected to provide a representative cross-section of British society, and the program's intention was to test the Jesuit maxim - "give me a child until he is seven and I will give you the man" - in the context of the British belief in the overriding and determining importance of class origins. The series developed into subsequent programs, filmed at seven-year intervals, the most recent being *"49 Up"*, "broadcast in 2005. About the Author STELLA BRUZZI is Professor of Film and Television Studies at the University of Warwick. She is the author of *'Bringing Up Daddy: Fatherhood and Masculinity in Post-war Hollywood'* (BFI 2005) and *'New Documentary: A Critical Introduction'* (Second edition, 2006).