

AQA A Level Unit 11 Close Study Products Student  
Workbook 2024 Exam Onwards  
Paper 2

*Long Form TV Drama*

*The Responder, Lupin, Capital, Deutschland '83, No Offence, The Killing*

This is the Workbook for use with **EDUSITES AQA SET PRODUCTS UNIT 11 A Level MEDIA STUDIES**. All of the notes refer to the content of this unit of work. They are designed to help you create a useful set of notes to help you with understanding the ideas covered in this examination, to support you in your Home Learning and be a clear revision aid in your preparations for the final examinations that you are required to take. You need to always keep in mind the examination board Assessment Objectives that your work is to be assessed with.

Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:

- the theoretical framework of media, contexts of media and their influence on media products and processes.
- Analyse media products using the theoretical framework of media, including in relation to their contexts, to make judgements and draw conclusions.
- Create media products for an intended audience, by applying knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media to communicate meaning.

Create products for intended audience and evaluate communication of meaning

- Demonstrate K&U of theoretical framework – *the Key concepts*
- Contexts of media products & production
- Analyse products by application of the framework/concepts/context

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## **Media Paper Two Section B Set products.**

- The focus of study is not the products, it is the theoretical framework and contexts of media.
- Exam questions focus on the theoretical framework and contexts of the media, students will be expected to answer with reference to, or analysis of, the relevant CSP.
- These products should be seen as a vehicle for the delivery of the specification, they are not products to be 'learned' in detail.
- It is essential that you study the CSPs in some detail, but it is advised that they are supplemented by further examples of age-appropriate media products in order to develop a full knowledge and understanding of the contexts of the media and the theoretical framework.

## **Lesson 1**

### **TV Long Form**

#### **PAPER 2: (80 marks)**

#### **4.2 Assessment objectives**

Assessment objectives (AOs) are set by Ofqual.

The exams measure how students have achieved the assessment objectives.

- AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media and contexts of media and their influence on media products and processes.
- AO2: Apply knowledge and understanding of the theoretical framework of media to:
  1. analyse media products, including in relation to their contexts and using academic theories
  2. evaluate academic theories
  3. make judgements and draw conclusions

This work on TV products builds on ideas and approaches covered during the previous EDUSITES units. This is what is meant by the term synoptic. There is nothing particularly 'new' to you, much of the theories and ideas are presented here

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to help you see how the knowledge and understanding that you have already gained can be applied to the tasks the MEDIA TWO examination will present.

If you use this material as intended, the notes in your EDUSITES Workbook will help you to build a useful source of guidance during your revision and study leave.

- As with all the AQA set products, study of set products is a means by which to study broader ideas and concerns of the QCA Media Framework.
- The set product enables us to explore these ideas in a practical manner. We use examples from the product to illustrate our understanding.
- The TV industry is highly significant in terms of its cultural and social impact. It can be seen to illustrate the values of society or sections of society.
- In looking at the cultural industry through the examples we may consider how the ideas of cultural theorists are relevant in explaining elements that shape contemporary culture and reflect those ideologies and values present in society.

## Lesson 2

### The exam

#### WHAT COULD THEY ASK YOU ABOUT?

They could ask you to answer a question about anything we cover in this unit, but some elements are more likely than others. Given that the set products are long form TV we can narrow some of these possibilities down. We can be certain that issues of Identity and representations will be vital, but to discuss any of these you must be fluent in the ability to fully deconstruct the set products.

Conventions of TV including the genre, typical content, typical structure etc. (why these things are used, audience impact etc.)

Stereotyping and Representation of women, men, ethnic minorities, age, disability, contexts, etc. (effects on the audience meaning/response, and why used)

Contexts: what they reveal about the era/nation that made them

- Discuss why people consume these.
- Discuss institutions that make/showcase such media products including the way they construct them, the way they market.

## Lesson 3

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## Genre

Genre operates by applying what Steve Neale called a 'pattern of repetition and difference' – it presents an audience with elements of storytelling that are familiar, elements the audience has found enjoyable and fulfilling of their needs (entertainment/identity/social interactions/surveillance). These encourage audiences to view the show. At the same time, if the show is too slavish in the way these elements are used it risks being boring or too obvious resulting in a formulaic show that offers no surprises, no sense of peril or enigma.

Products try to create a clear identity, its 'difference':

- This may be in its mise-en-scene – opting for darker palettes, exotic or mysterious locations (Ripper Street's grimly authentic period setting and disturbingly graphic violence) unsettling audience expectations.
- Its narrative – subverting the traditional narrative structure with false heroes or plot twists (Game of Thrones killing off central characters) rather than comfortable endings.
- Its representations – dark, almost anti-hero protagonists (Luther's deeply troubled character) rather than relying on familiar tropes.

Tv dramas, such as the set products, are consumer products, and, like any consumer product, they are a brand. In promoting the brand, a key objective of the product/platform is to be distinctive, to be recognized and discussed. In the sea of TV drama on internet streaming sites or TV channels they need the brand to stand out among other competing genre products.

The title and idea must capture the show's character, its attitude. It should fit the intended audience – violent; challenging, modern etc.. The ideal is that the title and its narrative tone/content/character can be instantly understood by the target audience.

In this, a great deal of attention is placed on trailers and credits which all express the same ideas: Is the show immersive, is it traditional: is it cutting edge, challenging, conservative?

## Lesson 4

### The formats

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Long Form Television is a term used to categorise/define a TV drama product in which each season's episodes form a cohesive whole. Examples include 'Breaking Bad', 'Game of Thrones' and 'House of Cards'.

Most long form TV drama has a consistent cast and narrative arc(s) across all episodes in a season. Conventionally, the average number of episodes for long form TV drama is ten per season. By adopting such a template these dramas are (1) far easier to fit into TV scheduling globally and (2) the box set video on demand expectations of streaming platforms and their subscribers. Successful long form dramas extend over several seasons by extending narrative ideas from the initial season or building on the characters or situations.

As in the UK, US network broadcasters must satisfy the needs of their advertisers whilst meeting the expectations of their audience, their market share. As in the UK, they must do so whilst meeting the controlling demands of regulation and law.

The impact of this on their content has traditionally been a reliance on highly formalised genre conventions with mainstream values that meet mainstream audience expectations. The result has often been that they generate conservative drama.

TV drama was glossy; values were mainstream to appeal to as wide a demographic as possible; the episodic form was dominant as it enabled the audience to drop in or out each week as they channel surfed the networks.

Launched in the 1970s HBO was the first US national subscription cable TV channel. The success of HBO was followed by the launch of FX, Showtime and AMC. Many of these channels are subsidiaries of far larger media conglomerates (HBO/Warner, FX/Fox). These channels, as well as using content from external studios, also began to invest in making their own shows.

The attraction of such channels to producers of content (and to their audience) is that subscription-based cable channels take more risks with content and form. Reliant on pleasing an audience who actively opt for such products, cable TV quickly provided adventurous and challenging products for an audience either tired or dissatisfied with the mainstream conventions of network TV

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By the early part of the 2000s *The Sopranos* and *The Wire* had not only won critical and audience acclaim but consistently scooped TV drama awards. These products took over as what we term ‘water cooler’ TV – the TV that ‘everyone’ was talking about – leading to massive increase in subscriptions and a drift away from network TV

The idea of binge-watching began with DVD in late 90s/early 2000s and this has increased with the availability of online box sets via Netflix, Amazon and Sky. The ability to select when and where to watch drama products, alongside the more adventurous content of subscription, lead to the establishment of the long form drama. Audiences could watch episodes back-to-back to sustain narrative momentum and deeper understanding of the plot. This enabled plots to become complex and multi-layered, diverting into a number of storylines appealing to a wider demographic. The binge-watching enabled by the rise in DVD box sets hurried an evolution from ‘water cooler’ TV to what has been termed ‘shared universe’ fandom – a deeper product/fan relationship.

## **Lesson 6**

### **The format**

*Breaking Bad* (2008-2013) has come to be seen as the epitome of the form, a cable streamed show that broke out to become a global phenomenon inspiring a massive fandom shared universe (and thousands of commercial artefacts). The fact that its main driving force was its writer, Vince Gilligan, serves to illustrate that many see the form as a writers medium rather than a director (film) or actors medium (theatre).

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*Breaking Bad* illustrates the repertory approach of the form where other characters are allowed to develop across the season and their narrative arcs become as compelling as that of the protagonist. Walt is clearly the centre, it is his story that grips us and represents the central concerns of the writer, but characters such as his

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brother-in-law Hank are thrust towards the audience. If Walter represents the modern era's corruption and inversion of The American Dream, then Hank's 'arc' can equally be seen to represent the fading national confidence of US – commercially; militarily; socially – and its ensuing crisis. The old certainties are gone, and, in the vacuum, there is concern as to what will replace it. The old and privileged look back with nostalgia for the 'old ways'; the young are full of bitterness and fear for the future.

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Breakdown of society – the decline of the respectable, hardworking, middle class. Underpinning this decline is the sense of insecurity, the lack of belief in the structures and institutions of society. Jobs and prosperity are threatened with the perception that there is no safety net to underpin those in need. Systems are failing – health; the law; the political governance; the state. There is little left to believe in, religion and the core notions of established American values – family; mom; apple pie; the flag; freedom; fairness; justice - are shown to be wanting when so much is in crisis. Most of all, the idea of American capitalism is shown as inverted, corrupt and broken (consider the world outside the show and the ongoing para-text that audiences would find in Wolf of Wall street; the financial crash of 2008

The show is never pro or anti-drugs, it portrays the realities of the so-called War on Drugs. For many, this war is conducted because the cultural use of drugs is thought to be the cause of these social ills, its widespread use to have poisoned the wider

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society. The corruption of Walter White is represented as the corruption of 'middle America' and its values. Walt, however, sees himself as a true capitalist fulfilling the supply and demand need of consumers with what he knows to be a quality product. The potent national myth of the American dream is shown to be lost. Its values of decency, sense of community and endeavour replaced by the culture of fame, celebrity and get-rich-quick. Some have referred to this as the 'Kardashianisation' of America and the West

## **Lesson 6**

### **Media Language**

The meaning of a product is constructed through the audience cultural understanding of signs – the connotations of images, sounds, lighting, costume etc. The meaning of such signs are located in the shared culture that creates the product and the audience that views it.

These common understandings are what Barthes termed myths – like myths they have only a limited link to reality, they are a cultural agreement and, as such, can be negotiated or changed according to the era.

These myths represent the dominant – hegemonic – values of the culture Baudrillard's ideas are a very useful way to analyse how representations are constructed and the way meaning is made in media products through extensive use of intertextuality and the predominance of signifiers to represent a historical time. Whilst recognising that the era is a construct – and thus subject to the ideas of the writers and production team – we must also be aware that such products use elements of nostalgia and curiosity of an era to appeal to audiences who recognise ideas constructed through this hyperreality that become part of their own overriding perception of that era. Similarly, in products such as Homeland and House of Cards audiences come to perceive as 'truth' ideas of the political structure and actions of government and the wider state that are merely the product of using hyperreality to quickly and efficiently sketch out such organisations and structures.

## **Lesson 7**

### **Representations**

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Media representations never construct only one identity for audiences, most often they offer a range of different and even contradictory messages that may be used by audiences to consider (a) how these match their current sense of self and (b) to apply this to re-shaping or evolving self-identity by either sustaining this sense of self or challenging it

Identities, including gender, sexuality and ethnicity, are now seen as less fixed than they were in the past.

The nature of mainstream LFTV media and the capability to access media products through a range of platforms enable individuals to more deeply explore and express their identities through elements such as: easier access to products; social media discussions; sense of tribe; sharing of ideas via fandom wikis etc.

The contemporary world is saturated by media. The media has evolved to become significantly more diverse, more complex and more 'interactive'.

Because of this pervasive influence, the ways in which we form and construct our identity has fundamentally changed. Rather than identity being a 'birthright' – something determined by one's social position and conditions of life – identities have, under media's powerful and repeated influence, become diverse and fluid. Contemporary culture provides a diverse range of 'symbolic resources' – images and signs – that we use to construct identity and to define our own lifestyles.

The formation of identities is therefore seen not as an inexorable process of socialization, but as a process in which individuals are active, selective and self-aware.

Media representations construct two key elements of any audience's understanding of a media product. First, by merely covering the topic/issue, the media in effect 'sets the agenda' communicates that this is an issue/subject worth consideration.

Secondly, by the way it presents the subject – Agenda Framing - the product actively positions an audience in relation to the subject. In effect, the product conditions how the audience see and feel about the agenda.

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The models of McComb & Shaw (Agenda setting) and McComb (Agenda Framing) imply the power of mass media to shape public understanding of the world around us.

- Understanding - being able to offer ideas, evidence, and reasons - for how your selected product constructs a sense of identity for its audience is a crucial part of your readiness for the set exam tasks. Such readiness will enable you to access the higher grades in discussing the impact of media products on audiences and wider society.
- You should be aware from prior learning of the key theoretical ideas in this area of identity and if you have followed earlier EDUSITES AQA Set Product Advanced Units 1-4 have had some practice in applying these to the other Set Products.
- Here we focus on the key models of Stuart Hall, David Gauntlett, Van Zoonen, bell hooks, Paul Gilroy and Judith Butler.
- These writers and their theoretical models are covered in great detail in the EDUSITES unit on Representation+ and also in the unit on Audience (GCSE) and Audience+ and are available to you as part of your EDUSITE subscription
- Representations are constructs – they are not ‘true’ or ‘accurate’ – simply opinion
- Representations construct one person’s/one view of the subject being presented
- Representations seek to align audience – their intention is for us to see the subject in a particular way. This may be innocuous narrative necessity such as ‘heroic’ or villainous but can stray into ideological – women as passive; men as macho; ethnic groups as sly or untrustworthy or noble.
- Alignment is always biased – the work of Hall etc. from the mid 1970s suggested that a products point of view may be challenged by audience

Stuart Hall : in analysing representation the focus should not be merely be on the relationship between representation and ‘reality’ but on the potential meanings such representations construct in the alignment of audience.

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A key focus should be on who or what is represented & who or what is not represented.

Representations may intend to fix meanings in a 'preferred reading', but audiences contest meanings according to their own identities (agree/negotiate/oppose)

## **Lesson 8**

### **Identity**

The idea that we understand gender through discourse – the narrative and spheres of action presented in the media products we consume. Van Zoonen holds that the media's repeated use of stereotypical images reinforces what are felt to be the dominant societal views. She feels media producers use these as they feel it offers greater chance for the commercial success of their products.

In producing meaning and representations in mass media product forms, women are often objectified (viewed/valued as passive sexual objects).

Van Zoonen emphasises the need for such mass media products to present gender as socially and culturally constructed, the idea that gender ideas vary depending on the cultural and historical context.

Van Zoonen holds that in the modern media market, ideas of gender are expressed in more diversity.

Feminist critiques of mass media tend to have a sole focus, that of challenging the dominant mainstream hegemony for its patriarchal and sexist representations.

Hooks model of Intersectionality states that such a focus is too narrow, rather we should explore how systems of oppression overlap. She argues (like Butler) that rather than a singular identity (femininity) an individual's sense of self is constructed from a variety of overlapping identities - gender, race, social class, sexuality, etc.

Intersectionality argues that oppressed groups should work together against all forms of oppression rather than focus on one.

Judith Butler's model of performativity argues that gender identity is not something we are born with; it is something we acquire through the everyday performance of gender roles established in mainstream society.

Gender is constructed through the performance of socially learned behaviours rather than being expressed by them. Gender is essentially a repetition of acts associated

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with the male or female – like a learned theatrical role. In the modern era, actions appropriate for men and women have been transmitted to produce a social atmosphere that maintains and legitimizes a seemingly natural gender binary whereas Butler believes that gender and sexual identity cannot be categorised into such a simple binary system.

Gilroy's model of The Black Atlantic is used to imply his view that Western black cultures rather than identifying as Afro-American or Afro-English are in fact their own ethnic group – the Black Atlantic – that blend elements of different African, American, Caribbean, and European cultures.

Gilroy's ideas assert that in a post-colonial world, the old colonial history exerts a powerful influence on attitudes to ethnicity of both white and black ethnicities that retain an assumption of the superiority of white western cultures and white identities. Such mainstream media tropes often require a submerging of black and ethnic identity to conform to the hyperreality constructed by media.

## **Lesson 9**

### **Character**

From the earliest versions, the modern iteration of long form TV drama has leant heavily on an audience appeal constructed and established by its earlier formats - the series and serial narrative.

These appeals are most obviously:

- Strong lead character (evolved/widened by LFTV to now include a larger diverse group of central characters)
- Strong narrative (evolved by LFTV to include parallel or intertwining narrative arcs)
- Relatable human dimension
- Set in locations and eras that drive relatable narrative arcs
- Use the table on the following slide to create/archive your ideas on at least the TWO set products you have selected to study for the examination.

From the earliest versions, the long form TV drama has leant heavily on the audience appeals constructed and established by central characters who often act

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as a lightning rod for the issues of an era: they capture the pulse or mood of an era or a nation or culture at a certain period – what is termed its zeitgeist\*

A figure such as Walt in Breaking Bad or Tony Soprano in The Sopranos are characters who found a resonance with audience – they embody the fears, hopes, issues of their time.

Crime dramas contain profound truths, precisely because they reach down to the root of what drives us. They force us to see life as it really is and make us reflect on dimensions that we dare not choose. Through the narrative arc of protagonists, viewers can measure how far we ourselves would go to get where they arrive.

Roberto Saviano states: We appreciate Tony Montana in Scarface, not because we want to be like him, but because we measure ourselves against what he does and the way he does it; measure our own desire for affirmation and yearning to change our destiny.

Walter White of Breaking Bad does things that clearly none of us would do, but he does it to fulfil desires we share with him.

Propp as a folklorist (a studier of folk tales) became interested in the relationship between characters and the narrative. Propp held that stories are character driven - that it is the actions of characters that drives a plot. It is their actions and decisions that shape the direction of a story. Propp held that characters were defined by what he termed 'Spheres of Action'. It was the working out of the interaction of these spheres or roles that shaped the narrative. The key roles are Hero; Villain; helper; dispatcher; donor; false hero; princess

## **Lesson 10**

### **Institutions**

As the format evolved, the institutions that produce them have diversified – what were content platforms have now become content providers (Netflix; Amazon; Apple+) turning themselves into larger - and culturally far more significant media institutions and conglomerates with growing capacity to influence and shape audience and wider society. Here we must consider McComb and Shaw and the ability of institutions through their products to set and frame a wider cultural agenda and debate.

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The convergence of access to devices and platforms such as the more powerful PlayStation and X-Box consoles, tablets, smart phones and laptops has accelerated this process.

David Hesmondhalgh states that the cultural industries have an interest in making profit, without profit they would not survive, and their products would not be made. Hesmondhalgh sees media products as evidence of commodification – products with a market value that is more important than any other considerations of value or worth or function. Mass media institutions placing profit before all other issues, explains why mass media products appear trivial and lacking in worth as they chase ever larger audiences.

Curran & Seaton: The radical potential of the internet has been contained by the exercise of power of conglomerates who have transformed it into a vehicle for ensuring product profitability can be exploited across a range of platforms, thus ensuring the web is in effect integrated into a cultural industry whose sole objective is profit-orientated.

Channel 4 remit has evolved and been refined in legislation since 1982. It combines a number of elements. It requires Channel 4 to be innovative, to inspire change, to nurture talent and to offer a platform for alternative views.

- To champion unheard voices: Our programmes shine a light on stories untold elsewhere.
- To innovate and take bold creative risks: We drive innovation, taking more risks than other channels.
- To inspire change in the way we lead our lives: We inspire citizenship and stimulate debate among viewers.
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The BBC is a public service organisation. It has five public purposes central to serving the public to achieve its core mission: to inform, educate and entertain.

- To provide impartial news and information to help people understand and engage with the world around them
- To support learning for people of all ages

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- To show the most creative, highest quality and distinctive output and services: Innovative content covering many different genres will be provided across a range of services and platforms, setting the standard both in the UK and globally.
- To reflect, represent and serve the diverse communities of all of the United Kingdom's nations and regions and, in doing so, support the creative economy across the United Kingdom: The lives of the people in the United Kingdom today will be accurately and authentically portrayed in the BBC's output and services to raise awareness of different cultures, contribute to social cohesion and invest in the development of each nation's creative economy.
- To reflect the United Kingdom, its culture and values to the world: High quality, accurate, impartial news coverage will be delivered to international audiences, aiding understanding of the UK as a whole.

## **Lesson 11**

### **Audience**

Fandom allows interactions that construct communities in which fans can express themselves and, in doing so, construct media spaces that enable the critique of the mainstream ideas as such sites/spaces do not rely on conventional ideas of gender, sexuality, ethnicity etc.

Jenkins sees Fandom and participatory culture as a form of cultural resistance. Fan created products such as fan-fiction and fan-videos often explore themes and aspects of the source material of interest to minority or female-dominated sections of the fan community, and social media discussions on twitter open a place of debate and of constructing identities, often going beyond the narratives of a male-dominated media industry. He suggests that "fandom's very existence represents a critique of conventional forms of consumer culture" providing "a space within which fans may articulate their specific concerns about sexuality, gender, racism, colonialism, militarism, and forced conformity" (Jenkins: 1992).

## **Lesson 12**

### **Audience**

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We need to consider one of the key ideas/issues the exam board have indicated to be of importance – namely considering the reasons for the success of these products. This boils down to:

- Understanding their appeal to audience
- Understanding their appeal to institutions

This incorporates any tasks requiring exploring issues of difference in representations, mise-en-scene and narrative elements such as character and plot structuring.

The tasks set will both require comparisons of the two products, essentially comparing how different nationalities construct media products to appeal to the ever wider global audience evolving over the last ten years.

To respond effectively you should draw upon the wider media knowledge and understanding of it developed throughout the course. A Senior Examiner would direct you to applying the ideas covered in EDUSITES Unit Media Representations+, Media Audience+ and Media Institutions+ where all these theoretical models and strategies are covered in detail.

Here we summarise some of the key issues of industry and audience uses of long form TV drama products.

Key to keep in mind is that the classification of these products is a industry/commercial construction rather than an artistic one. It enables audience to locate products that fulfil their perceived needs and industry how to exploit and effectively market them to such groups.

- What is the ownership structure of the channel/platform of your products?
- Is there evidence this platform restricts access to a diverse range of content?

The success of Netflix; Amazon; Apple+TV as streaming platforms has challenged the dominance of established terrestrial media institutions such as BBC & C4, who have fought back with iPlayer and C4 Hub to offer alternative ways to access products such as the LFTV of the set products.

Channel 4 – for Deutschland 83 – follows its PSB remit to offer a platform for media products from diverse cultures. Whilst the channel is linked to some investment in

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creating original productions, much of its programming is through reliance on commercially successful products from established producers/foreign channels.

The BBC now outsources production to key providers but has expanded its platforms horizontally.

Media industries dominated by a small number of conglomerates.

The rapid improvement in current technology and easy access to platforms has led to both high production costs and the capacity for pirating of products through the ease of reproduction and of sharing of media products. In response, such industries focus on risk reduction. As well as structural changes such as vertical integration, there has come to be a reliance on established genres, stars and narratives that has led to the homogeneity talked of by Adorno and Horkheimer

To what extent have the producers used established genres, stars and narratives to appeal to the audience?

Hesmondhalgh is useful for considering the ways in which Long Form TV Drama is designed to appeal to a broad audience. A range of strategies including the use of popular genres such as crime, horror and sci-fi and the use of well-known actors are all elements in much of the form.

In Deutschland 83 the use of hybridity would provide evidence of this, though its subversion of the narrative point of view challenges its conforming rigidly to the industry norms or audience expectations – though this can be attributed to Neale and the idea of repetition and difference as key to success of modern genre products.

There are no established stars, though the evoking of the 1980s might be seen to tap into audience nostalgia a key element in much period drama that would help the achieving of broad audience appeal.

- The use of an established success – the show was critical hit in the USA but relative failure in Germany – meant C4 could avoid some risk.

C4 can be seen as a challenger to established media organisations, disrupting the dominance of BBC and ITV and the cable dominance of Sky and the online dominance of Netflix/Amazon

The long form TV drama success:

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Industry:

- It references a pre-existing genre (reduces risk)
- It targets two discrete primary audiences (hybridity)
- It applies both nostalgia/excitement of era presented.
- It relies on audience understanding/expectations (repetition/difference)

Audience:

- Escapism; social interaction; identity
- Relies/subverts set conventions and understood stereotypes
- Postmodern narrative experience (audience awareness of forms)
- Appeals to sense of identity as educated/aware/concerned

Lends conversations to social media (twitter-friendly; instagrammable)

## Lesson 13

### Audience

Social Learning Theory suggests that observation and modelling play a primary role in how and why people learn. Bandura's theory goes beyond the perception of learning being the result of direct experience with the environment.

The theory examines how behaviour is imitated by others, especially children. The importance of Social Learning Theory is in the idea that children copy behaviour and learn through identification. In applying it to media products it sustains the idea that children (and vulnerable adults) learn behaviour through TV and media consumption as much as through direct real-life experiences. It is part of the argument for censoring access to certain media products.

Exposure to modern media (in Gerbner's study TV) encourages standardised roles and behaviours. Gerbner found that long term users of television were more likely to develop and portray the attitudes and outlooks of the characters they watched. A well cited aspect of this is termed 'mean world syndrome' – that following lengthy exposure to high levels of television violence those audiences often developed negative attitudes towards others.

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Prolonged TV viewing led to 'mainstreaming' – a common outlook on the world based on ideas, attitudes, and characters seen on TV.

Reception theory has it that any media product has preferred, negotiated and oppositional readings of its message. What the audience understand the product to be saying.

Understanding who the audience are the demographics and psychographics of the group means that we can make reasonable assumptions about their lifestyles – their interests, their concerns, their outlook, their cultural references etc.

From this we can make informed assessments of how they might respond to the style, content and tone of TV products and how they might reflect the way members of the audience are likely to think (most often we can assume that they align in taking the preferred reading).

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