YR 11 – Television, Newspapers and Music

The Avengers

Social Context

The Avengers was a landmark pre-watershed TV series in the 1960s and reflects the brand image of ITV as more daring in this era. It helped to define the 'spy drama' genre and was influenced by events. Some episodes parodied historical events. The sixties were a time of plenty after the austerity of the fifties. Labour governments now dominated the decade as people changed their ideas, wanting freedom to spend their money and enjoy the more lavish lifestyle that the economic boom brought in. Youth dominated the era, challenging the old ways and demanding a more equal society in terms of gender, sexuality and ethnicity.

ITV started in 1955 after much pressure from UK industry for a commercial platform for national advertising in the vein of the USA. It was seen to provide healthy competition for the BBC with its monopoly over television broadcasting to ensure that programme standards were kept high. However, the commercial station soon gained the largest share of the audience by introducing popular formats such as sit-coms, game shows and thrillers. By the time of the mid-sixties and The Avengers, competition for audience was limited. With a monopoly of broadcast advertising revenue, ITV was secure in knowing that its products would attract a mass audience, so it was prepared to take chances and allow a series to develop over a number of seasons. Equally, it had the funding to ensure that its products were somewhat glossier by the standard of the day.

Social values

The ITV remit limited non-UK content - this means it had to ensure a steady provision of UK products rather than merely importing the far cheaper US equivalents. This meant that products such as The Avengers had a specifically UK based tone in narrative and in elements such as casting and representation. The dominant UK white culture and TV audience meant that not only may it have seemed 'justified' (and unchallenged) to feature an all-white cast but considered as a 'normal' or 'realistic' representation of UK society. Series 4 Avengers pre-dated the Civil rights and equality legislation and such matters were not then seen to be an issue for mainstream society or TV stations whose audience expected to see itself represented in mainstream TV drama both in casting and in storylines if it was to be relatable.

Avengers Characters

The franchise became a vehicle for its central character, the archetypal English gentleman spy, **Steed**. He wears a bowler hat, umbrella, suit and buttonhole representing the global trope of Englishness, as does his accent and manner.
Emma Peel was part of a breakthrough in female representation on TV, particularly in the action genre. She is clearly the equal of Steed and better than the many male villains they confront. The sexualised and eroticised image constructed by the clothing she wore – tightfitting cat suits often of leather and pvc – portrayed changing attitudes towards sex and the role of women.

Vigil Characters

The Navy is renowned for being male dominated and sexist, with even today only 9.3% female. However, in Vigil there is representation of women in positions of power, but ultimately it still fits into a patriarchal society with a male captain. Diversity is also well represented in Vigil with class, race and ethnicity. The protagonist is a female detective in a same sex relationship subverting the stereotype.

Newspapers

. ***The Observer***, established in 1791, was the world's first Sunday paper. It is regarded as a quality newspaper, noted for its emphasis on foreign as well as domestic coverage. The paper devotes extensive space to the arts, Government, education, and politics, has a global reputation for responsible and reliable journalism.
In the 1820s, thousands of copies were – with a government subsidy that attempted to influence public opinion – delivered each week for free to 'lawyers, doctors and gentlemen', but the paper still often published pieces hostile to the Government on issues of freedom and human rights, seeding its image as both a publication for the educated but also for its independence and liberal values. For the next hundred and fifty years the paper had several owners until in 1993 it was purchased by the ***Guardian Media Group***.
The Observer has, over the past 25 years, come to be closely associated with ***The Guardian***, being seen as in reality *The Guardian on Sunday*. Both papers share the same website and promote each other.
A re-design in 2010 saw both papers adopting the same design layout, as has the 2018 design. Today, their front-page graphics, use of colour, design, and layout means that they are, to all intent, identical. Something your research should establish.

Audience

Remember that the shows should reflect the audiences of the era. People watching these shows should be able to relate to the characters and context.

Vigil

The Cold War - After World War II, the USA and its allies (including the UK), and the Soviet Union (Russia) began a decades-long political struggle for supremacy. Soldiers of the Soviet Union and the United States didn't battle directly during the Cold War, instead , for more than forty years, the two superpowers directly threatened each other with nuclear weapons. **Women –** Since the 2000s, stronger roles for women have been developed in television series, reflecting many changes in gender equality. For example, Amy Silva has important status as lead investigator and has power in the police force because of her status, reflecting the number of women in positions of authority in 2022. Another example is Tara Kierly, a Petty Officer in the Royal Navy. She is a Warfare Specialist Submariner assigned to the Vanguard class submarine HMS Vigil. She is a person of colour and woman holding a position of respect subverting the stereotype. **Masculinity –** The Navy is dominated by men , who hold the positions of authority and power. Mark Prentice is a stereotypical white male in a position of power who is arrogant and overconfident. **Sexuality –** The Equality Act of 2010 made discrimination against LGBT people illegal. By 2022, audiences are used to seeing gay characters on TV. Amy Silva is bisexual. She used to think she was straight and never considered getting involved with a woman until she fell in love with a fellow police officer: Kirsten. She plays the hero role stereotypically played by men. She has a contradiction of weakness and strength. **Multiculturalism and ethnicity –** By 2022 audiences recognise that Britain is a multicultural society, despite political debates about immigration and Brexit. In Vigil, there are a number of different ethnicities in the Navy, but these are hardly remarked on or noticed, as differences are just accepted. Commander Neil Newsome is a high ranking person of colour subverting the stereotypical representation and showing the BBC's commitment to diversity.

Music

Radio 1 audience – addressed by presenters close to the age of their main listeners demographic of 15-29. The language is restless and energetic often using informal, everyday language that may include slang and intertextual references to pop culture.
Radio 2 – has a demographic of 35+ the music playlist and age of presenters represents this. Ex-presenters of Radio 1 tend to work on Radio 2 (growing older with the audience e.g. Tony Blackburn and Steve Wright)
BBC Radio 4 – has an average demographic of 54 and the tone of the station reflects this not only in the content but in public perception of being worthy and serious and the use of clear diction and formal language.

Media Language

Narrative
Stereotype
Representation
Intertextuality
Subvert
Genre
Themes
Context
Denotations
Connotations
Masthead
Barcode
Dateline
Cover line
Main image
Puff
Price
Tag line
Headline
Lead in
Drop cap
Pull quote
Gutter
Byline
Body text
Diegetic
Non-diegetic
Hybridity

Convergence

- **The merging of distinct technologies, industries or devices into a unified whole.**
- **Online newspapers have a technological and cultural convergence. E.g. Headlines/videos**
- **Platforms e.g. app store (touch screen technology)**

Definitions

Trope - a device for representing character. It is a well-used cliché, e.g.. Glasses to signify 'a nerd'

Franchise – one party allows another to sell its products

Demographics – data relating to age, gender, income or postcode

Ethnographics – our tastes. Interests and views

Ideology – shared values and beliefs

Confirmation bias – notice something that reinforces what you already believe.

Theories

Dyer – Star Theory

Hall – Reception Theory

Neale – Repetition and Difference Theory

Perkins – Rethinking Stereotypes

Butler - Gender

Morley – Audience Theory

Industries

Sony

Universal

Bauer