

# **GCSE**

# **Media Studies**



# **Knowledge**

# **Booklet:**

# **Component 2**

# LUTHER

(Series 1 Episode 1, 2010)

Factsheet 1 - Media Language & Representation



## Acknowledgements

All quotes from dialogue: *Luther* Series 1, Episode 1 (2010), BBC.

Images	Acknowledgement
All images	BBC

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# LUTHER

## (Series 1 Episode 1, 2010)

### Component 2: Understanding Forms and Products

#### Focus Areas:

Media Language

Representation

Media Industries

Audiences

Media contexts

#### PRODUCT CONTEXT

- The set product is the first episode of Series 1, broadcast in May 2010.
- *Luther* is a police procedural crime drama and an example of an inverted detective story. It is produced by BBC Drama, distributed by BBC Studios, and broadcast on BBC1. It is also available on iPlayer and Amazon Prime.
- The series was created and is written by Neil Cross who drew his inspiration for the protagonist Luther from Sherlock Holmes and the American detective Columbo.
- It has had 5 series, the most recent being in 2019.

#### PART 1: STARTING POINTS – Media Language

##### How the various forms of media language create and communicate meanings.

Semiotics can be used to analyse aspects of media language. Consider:

**Settings and location:** the urban setting of *Luther* immediately connotes realism with intertextual references to other gritty crime dramas.

Audiences therefore have expectations of the narrative and themes. Settings also relate to characters, for example:

Zoe's office is large and modern but lined with books suggesting her important role and her

intelligence. Luther's workplace is darker and more claustrophobic with a lack of natural light connoting his troubled persona. These binary opposing locations also serve to illustrate the differences between Zoe and Luther and the problems in their relationship.

Alice's initial rural, comfortable setting misleads us to accept her as the victim. Her flat later in the narrative establishes her power within the narrative with its view across London suggesting she is in control and omniscient.

#### Visual codes

**Codes of clothing:** The connotations of characters' clothing and appearance create meanings. For example, Alice has long red hair, she wears red lipstick and dresses in suits or tightfitting clothing connoting intertextual links with the femme fatale character, a stock character in early 20<sup>th</sup> century films – a mysterious, beautiful but villainous woman with dubious morals, who sets out to ensnare a man for her own ends. Luther's clothing suggests his rank within the police, but he is often dishevelled, connoting that he does not always conform to expectations and may be more of a maverick.



**Codes of gesture and expression:** Luther's gesture and expression often connotes his inability to control his emotions, he can be violent and behave unpredictably. Examples include when he goes to visit Zoe at her home and punches the door and his reaction to the call from Zoe telling him about her encounter with Alice when he proceeds to wreck his office. Here his facial expressions and physical gestures convey aspects of this personality and this contributes to tension within the narrative. Alice's gestures reinforce her need to control and her psychopathic tendencies. Examples include her arm around Zoe's neck, the initial use and recurrence of the hat pin and her hand reaching out to touch Luther's face in her flat.

### Technical codes:

Camera shots, movement and angles work together to communicate messages and 'show' the narrative. *Luther* has high production values and a cinematic style which is used to convey information without the use of dialogue. Close-ups advance the relationships between characters and establish tension and a dynamic. The interview with Alice after the crime uses close-ups and shot-reverse-shot to communicate the change in Alice and the realisation in Luther that she is the perpetrator.

The camera also establishes enigmas, for example the repeated shots of the murdered dog which initially seems unimportant, but whose role in the narrative is eventually revealed.

**Genre: Crime dramas have a recognisable set of conventions. These will evolve over time and may be specific to a sub-genre, for example a psychological crime drama. However, they all share similarities including:**

- A **narrative** based on a crime that needs to be investigated and solved. This may conform to Todorov's theory where the structure is linear from the initial disruption through to a resolution, or non-linear where time and space is manipulated.
- Binary oppositions that function as a narrative element including good vs evil and hero vs villain.

- A set of recognisable **character types** including a hierarchy with a boss, a detective and sidekick and other characters, for example a victim, a range of suspects, the perpetrator of the crime and experts/witnesses who help in the solving of the crime.
- **Settings and locations** to establish realism including the police station, the crime scene and in *Luther*, urban locations. Some contemporary crime dramas feature the home of the detective in order to develop their character. Luther's home serves to reinforce his issues and instability, it is sparse and seems temporary as he thinks he can repair his relationship with Zoe, even though this seems increasingly unlikely. The setting of the pre-title sequence establishes the dark mood of the drama.
- **Iconography** related to the genre or to the character. For example, Luther's overcoat becomes synonymous with his character. Other iconography in this episode includes crime scene tape, a weapon and uniforms denoting rank.
- **Audio codes** including non-diegetic mood music to evoke tension, dialogue incorporating lexis specific to the genre and sound effects to advance the narrative.

### Narrative

The set episode of *Luther* has a pre-title sequence which explores events that have occurred earlier. This sequence establishes tension from the start and the exposition sheds light on Luther's character, it also places the audience in a privileged spectator position. The audience then have expectations of how the protagonist may behave subsequently.

The episode then follows the conventional narrative of a police procedural crime drama adopting a linear structure with key moments where the narrative is advanced. For example, when Luther starts to suspect Alice, when he visits Alice to tell her will find the weapon and the confrontation on the bridge between Alice and Luther, leaving a cliff hanger before the next episode.

Action codes are typical to this genre and in *Luther* they set in motion elements of the narrative, for example Alice finding the whereabouts of Zoe and threatening her causes Luther to react and embark on a particular journey.

### Theoretical perspective on narrative: Applying Propp.

This is a character-driven narrative theory which suggests that characters influence a narrative and communicate meanings through cause and effect, the narrative progresses as a result of their actions. All characters have motives, these are revealed during the story arc and the narrative, according to Propp, is driven by the need to achieve their goals. Propp suggested there were a range of narrative roles, some of which can be applied to characters in *Luther*.

Luther demonstrates attributes of the **hero** figure which is established through the cinematography, framing, the narrative, and his interactions with colleagues. However, he also demonstrates traits of the **anti-hero** in that he is flawed and does not conform to expectations. This is established from the beginning when he lets Henry Madsen fall. Both Alice and Henry Madsen perform as **villains**. Madsen, although he only appears at the beginning of this episode, is a constant reminder to us that Luther is not a typical police detective, as in the opening scene the lines between villain and hero are blurred. Alice, whilst initially appearing to be the damsel in distress is revealed as the villain with an astute mind and an ability to manipulate and control people and situations.



Zoe both conforms to and subverts the role of **princess**. She is married to the hero; she is threatened by the villain and needs the protection of a male character (Mark). However, she also has her own power base, she is a successful lawyer and has made the decision to leave Luther and is determined in the decision to take her life in another direction. DC Ripley assumes the role of the **helper/sidekick**.

### How choice of elements of media language influences meaning. Consider:

The way in which the audience is introduced to the main characters through media language including cinematography, framing, and shot composition. The first shot of Zoe is a bird's eye view of her office where she is several floors up and surrounded by windows, a typical motif connoting power and prestige. Luther in the initial chase sequence is in darkness and is indistinguishable from the villain, Henry Madsen. Alice's first shot portrays her as vulnerable and afraid as she cowers, blood-stained in her home.



The paradigmatic choices that have been made regarding the characters and their settings and what this conveys about their role and power within the narrative.

How the choices of technical codes influence meaning in the interactions between characters and how this advances the narrative. For example, when Luther interviews Alice at the police station. The choices of elements of media language including gesture codes, expression and technical codes show the audience the change in Alice from one of a vulnerable victim, to a potential villain who can manipulate the

situation. Consider the importance of close-up shots and the yawn in this scene and how this rapidly advances the narrative and displays Luther's skill as a detective.

### **Theoretical perspectives on genre, including principles of repetition and variation; the dynamic nature of genre; hybridity and intertextuality. Consider:**

Television crime dramas, like other popular genres, have a repertoire of elements that places them within the genre. These are recognisable to audiences fulfilling their expectations and are useful in the marketing of the product. However, although crime dramas rely on repetition of common conventions, they also vary and introduce different elements (Neale).

Genres are dynamic, developing over time to reflect social and cultural change, for example the way in which *Luther* addresses the changing roles of women and cultural diversity. It has become less easy to categorise certain programmes as they borrow from other genres and hybridise (Neale).

Genres also use intertextuality to engage with audiences. *Luther* incorporates elements of American police procedural and film noir through cinematography and the character of Alice as the femme fatale.

## **PART 2: STARTING POINTS – Representation**

### **The ways in which the media re-present (rather than simply present) the world, and construct representations of reality. Consider:**

The fact that all representations are constructed and are not windows on the world. Producers of media products construct representations through the use of:

- **Technical codes.** Camera shots, angles, movements and editing combine to construct representations. Consider the first time we are introduced to characters in *Luther* and how the camera constructs the representation. This is used to position the audience in relation to the characters, this may change through the programme. In the interview scene in *Luther*, the shots and

editing gradually reveal a different aspect to Alice's character and change the audiences' position in relation to her.

- **Audio codes:** diegetic and non-diegetic sound including a soundtrack, mood music and dialogue contribute to the construction of representations. For example, the ways in which other characters refer to or describe Luther and Alice contribute to their representations. In Luther's discussion with his colleagues mid-way through his interview with her after the murders he says of Alice, '*It's the way of her saying to us, look at me*' and '*She's proud of this, why give anyone else the credit*', this dialogue contributes to the representation of Alice as clever and manipulative.
- **Iconography:** clothing in particular contributes to the construction of representations and will have been a key consideration of the producers in creating the characters and their roles.

### **The social and cultural significance of particular representations in terms of the themes and issues that they address. Consider:**

#### **Representations of ethnicity:**

*Luther* as a black detective in a British crime drama challenges stereotypical representations of black men in the genre. The assumptions of the audience are challenged in the opening scene when Luther is chasing Henry Madsen, as stereotypically Luther would be the villain. Both the villains in the series are white.

This challenging of pre-conceived ideas around ethnicity reflects changes in society with regard to diversity and the construction of reality. Zoe is a mixed-race woman who is a human rights lawyer, again reflecting social change.

#### **Representations of masculinity:**

Several of the men in the police force are in positions of power, even Teller has to answer to her male boss and justify her decisions regarding Luther.



Luther demonstrates stereotypical masculine traits including his size, power, and aggression. Whilst loving Zoe and wanting to save their marriage, he also scares her. However, he is also emotionally controlled by both Alice and Zoe, demonstrating a more complex representation of masculinity. He also readily shows his emotions challenging the trope of the tough, male detective.

Mark is a binary opposite to Luther as a more metrosexual representation of masculinity which Luther finds hard to accept. Alice alludes to the power struggle within the relationship between Luther and Zoe when she taunts him by saying: *'Why did your wife turn her face from you? Is it because you shine so bright?'*

### **Representations of women:**

Consider feminist perspectives evident in the way in which the female characters in *Luther* are represented:

Alice both supports and challenges typical representations of femininity. At the start she is represented as vulnerable, she is shaking, crying, and presenting as scared. However, she rapidly transforms into a powerful and manipulative antagonist. In her conversation with Luther in her flat she alternates between the femme fatale

seductress and a threat to Luther. In answer to his threat *'I'm coming for you'*, she replies *'Not if I come for you first'*, setting herself up as intellectually superior to him and capable of controlling the situation.



Zoe's representation is more ambiguous. Whilst she is a successful lawyer with a good job, she is also vulnerable, at risk and in need of protection from men. She is also defined by romance, love and relationships and does not progress the narrative other than what happens to her, not by her.

Teller is in a strong position and reflects changes in women's roles in the police force. She is instrumental in driving the narrative forward. However, many of her traits are more masculine.

# LUTHER

(Series 1 Episode 1, 2010)

Factsheet 2 - Media Industries, Audiences & Media Contexts



## Acknowledgements

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# LUTHER

## (Series 1 Episode 1, 2010)

### Component 2: Understanding Forms and Products

#### Focus Areas:

Media Language

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#### PART 1: STARTING POINTS - Media Industries

**The nature of media production, including by large organisations, who own the products they produce and by individuals and groups:**

There have been significant changes to the television industry in recent years due to the impact of digital technology on the way in which programmes are produced and distributed and how audiences consume them. Audiences have become more fragmented and traditional broadcasters like the BBC must evolve in the ways in which they produce, distribute and market their products.

*Luther* is a mainstream programme from a popular genre, produced and distributed by the BBC. It has become one of the organisation's flagship programmes, ensuring a loyal audience. The set episode had 6.35 million viewers when it aired in 2010. It was ranked 6 out of 10 programmes for that week, the top four slots being taken by episodes of *EastEnders* and the fifth slot by *Doctor Who*, a successful start for a new programme and testament to the marketing campaign.

The success of *Luther* over the five series is also an example of how the BBC as a mainstream broadcaster, whilst engaging in risk and producing new, innovative programmes, also relies on the repetition of successful formats to secure audiences in an increasingly competitive media landscape.

The programme has relatively high production values for a television series, evident in the choice of locations, the cinematography and the well-established actors including Idris Elba, Saskia Reeves and Indira Varma.

*Luther* has a wide global distribution: it was previously available on Netflix, is currently (March 2021) available on Amazon Prime and is broadcast on BBC America as well as in over 200 other territories. As part of its global promotional campaign BBC Worldwide released a video to market the series to international buyers featuring a scene from the programme dubbed into different languages (<https://www.youtube.com/watch/BudHdXEyBqM>).

#### **The impact of the increasingly convergent nature of media industries across different platforms:**

Whilst *Luther* is broadcast at 9pm each week during a series run, audiences also have the opportunity to access the programme across different platforms and devices. Digital technology also allows audiences to binge-watch the series. The series is also available on DVD.

Before the last series of *Luther*, all the previous series were available to watch on iPlayer encouraging audiences to engage with the brand.

There is also a BBC website dedicated to the programme, and social media platforms.

### **The importance of different funding models, including government funded, not-for-profit and commercial models:**

Television companies operate either a public service or commercial broadcasting model. The BBC is a public service broadcaster, funded by the licence fee, with a remit to inform, educate and entertain, and this influences what is produced. The funding arrangement allows the BBC some aspect of freedom as they are less driven by ratings and profit. Its relative autonomy enables it to offer a diverse range of programming content and crime dramas are an important element of its content and schedule.

The BBC does have an element of governmental control and there is an ongoing discussion centred around the continuation of the licence fee, which is set by the government, with some members unhappy about the BBC's funding model. However, there is considerable support from the public, the arts and entertainment industry and sections of the government for what is seen as the essential role played by the public service broadcaster.

### **The function and types of regulation in the media:**

Television companies and specific channels operate self-regulation through scheduling decisions, the watershed, and announcements at the beginning of programmes giving information about possible areas of offence.

The BBC Board is responsible for ensuring that the BBC fulfils its mission as detailed in the Royal Charter which sets out the BBC's object, mission, and public purposes. It is reviewed and renewed regularly, the current charter began in January 2017 and ends in December 2027.

The BBC is externally regulated by Ofcom which is accountable to Parliament and publishes standards which must be adhered to by

broadcasters. DVD releases of the programme are classified by the BBFC. One of the duties of Ofcom is to examine specific complaints made by listeners about programmes broadcast on channels that it has licenced.

### **PART 2: STARTING POINTS – Audiences**

*Luther* is produced by the BBC, a public service broadcaster. Audiences will be familiar with BBC content and have an expectation of a quality drama with high production values. The trailer for the programme uses the slogan 'Original British Drama' to appeal to the audience suggesting the BBC's investment in homegrown drama.

Crime drama is a popular genre with audiences and the BBC is known for producing successful programmes in this genre.

*Luther* aims to reach a wide audience and appeals to both men and women due to its diverse range of characters. The 9pm scheduling time is a popular slot for the BBC's highest rated shows and placing it after the watershed highlights the adult content.

Whilst the BBC target audience for the programme is 25-40, the fact that it also appeared on Netflix suggests a younger, 16-25 year-old, target audience who are more likely to binge watch the series.

### **The ways in which media organisations target audiences:**

- The use of teaser and longer trailers introduced the character of Luther to audiences and established an enigma around his character.
- The high production values obvious from the marketing material including the use of recognisable stars and the expectations related to the BBC branding.
- The introduction of enigmatic characters to intrigue audiences including Luther, but also Alice who became very popular. The BBC website for the programme included

'Postcards from Alice' encouraging audiences to engage with the character's story world.

- The creation of other interactive and online features which extend the world of the programme including 'Ripley's Video Diary' which involves the audience by creating a backstory around Luther. The blog from the writer Neil Cross gives an insight into the process of creating the programme and the BBC Writer's room allows audiences to read programme scripts.



### The role of media technologies in reaching and identifying audiences, and in audience consumption and usage:

- Changes and developments in technology have had an impact upon the way in which audiences access, consume and respond to media products. Audiences now have a range of content to choose from on a range of different platforms to suit their needs and lifestyle.
- *Luther*, as well as being available to watch on BBC, BBC iPlayer and Amazon Prime, also has a website where audiences can access extra information and videos related to the programme.
- The programme can also reach audiences through social media sites including Twitter and Facebook which also allows the BBC to review audience reactions to characters and storylines.

### Theoretical perspectives on audience: Blumler and Katz's Uses and Gratifications theory:

There are several theories that have been written to explore the relationship between audiences and media products. The Uses and Gratifications theory was one of the first to suggest that audiences can be active consumers of the media and seek out and use different media products in order to satisfy a need and to experience different pleasures including:

- **Entertainment/diversion:** audiences watch some media products including crime dramas to escape from everyday life into a fictional world that absorbs their interest. *Luther* is an inverted detective story and audiences may also gain pleasure from picking up clues and trying to solve the crime along with the detective. Audiences may recognise the conventions of the genre in the programme and will predict certain outcomes, experiencing pleasure when they are correct in their assumptions. *Luther* involves the audience from the beginning by placing them in a privileged spectator position regarding the outcome of the chase and Henry Madsen at the start and the relationship between Luther and Alice. Audiences may also be attracted to the actors who are popular, for example Idris Elba, Ruth Wilson and Saskia Reeves. Luther is an enigmatic character who does not display the typical characteristics of his role and this may add to his appeal 'When I type the end of any series I immediately start to miss him' (Neil Cross, writer of *Luther* [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)).



- **Information/education:** crime dramas can give audiences an insight into another area of society with which they may not be familiar, in *Luther* this is the police procedures.
- **Social interaction:** this pleasure has been enhanced by developments in technology. Audiences watch episodes of *Luther* and at the same time interact with friends and family on social media. As there are long gaps between series of *Luther* the first and following series become examples of water-cooler television and as such are discussed by audiences in anticipation of their broadcast and during the series run.
- **Personal identity:** the programme may appeal to the audience because they relate to a character or a particular situation.

### PART 3: STARTING POINTS – Media Contexts

The specification requires learners to develop their understanding of relevant contexts of media and their influence on the product.

#### Social and Cultural contexts

How *Luther* reflects the society and culture of the time in which it was made through its

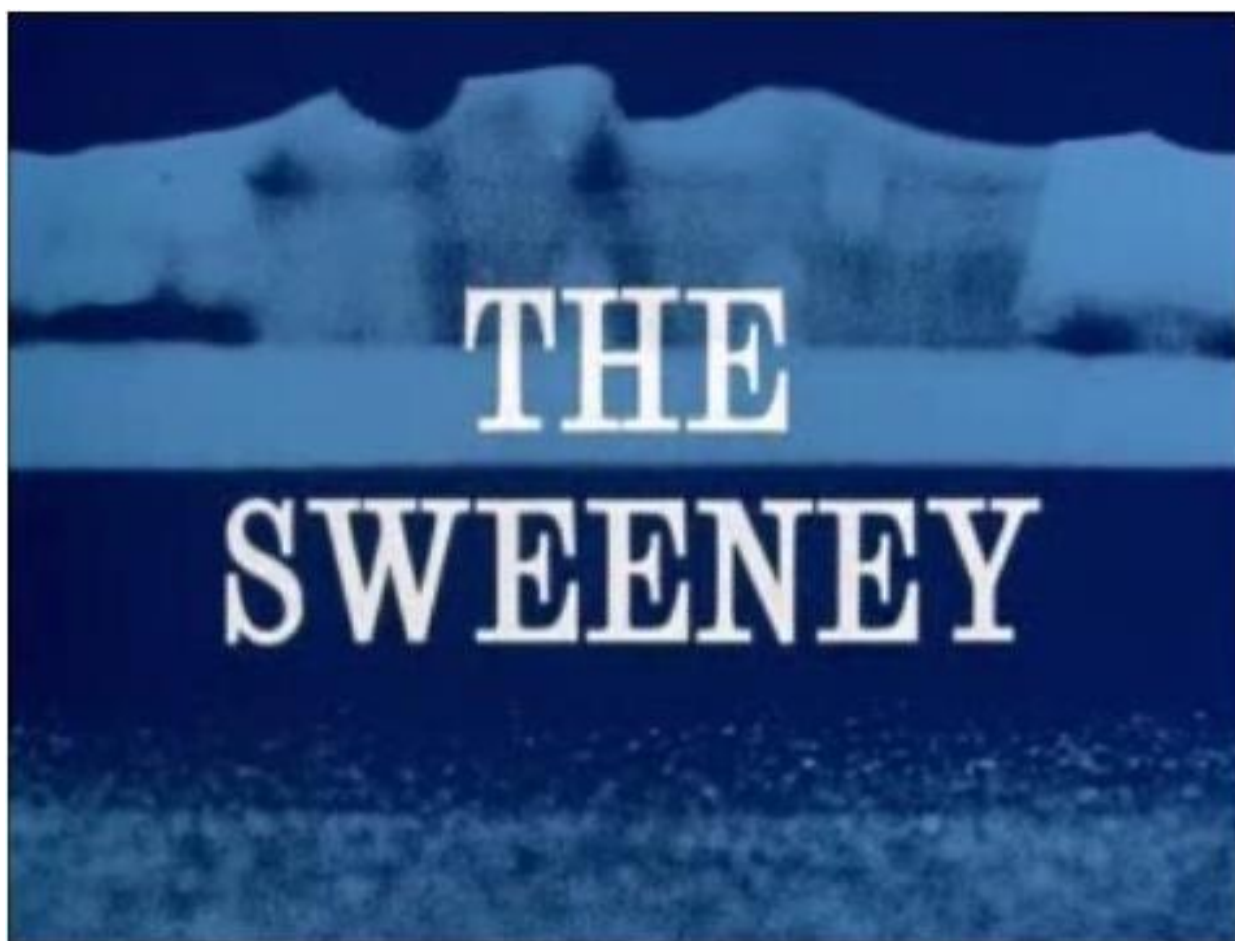
representations, themes, values, and messages. Consider:

- How the representations of women in *Luther* challenge typical representations in crime drama illustrating how the genre has developed over time and been informed by cultural influences.
- How theme of the representation of evil and the role of the villain offers a more contemporary view of society.
- How Luther's character reflects the time in which the programme was made. Consider the similarities he has with Regan and Carter in *The Sweeney* and the ways in which is he different.
- How the programme addresses the under representation and misrepresentation of ethnic diversity in television crime dramas.
- How *Luther* be said to have cultural links to the film noir genre and American procedural crime dramas. Consider the codes of clothing, the cinematography in key scenes and the role of the femme fatale.
- The similarities and differences in the way in which London is represented in *The Sweeney* and *Luther* and how settings and locations have a social and cultural significance.

# The Sweeney

(Series 1 Episode 1, 1975)

Factsheet 1 - Media Language & Representation



## Acknowledgements

All quotes from dialogue: *The Sweeney* Series 1, Episode 1 (1975), ITV.

Images	Acknowledgement
All images	Freemantle Media / ITV

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# The Sweeney

(Series 1 Episode 1, 1975)

## Component 2: Understanding Forms and Products

### Focus Areas:

Media Language

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Audiences

Media contexts

### PRODUCT CONTEXT

- The set historical product is a ten-minute extract from Series 1, Episode 1 (1975) of *The Sweeney*: 'Ringer'. It was first broadcast on ITV on January 2<sup>nd</sup> 1975 at 9pm.
- *The Sweeney* is a crime drama that blends action with police procedural.
- It was created by Ian Kennedy Martin and was a spin-off from a 1974 Armchair Theatre television drama called *Regan*. This pulled in over 7 million viewers and the decision was made to develop the idea into a series.
- The programme focuses on two members of The Flying Squad, a branch of the Metropolitan Police. The programme's name is derived from the Cockney rhyming slang for 'Flying Squad' – 'Sweeney Todd'. John Thaw played Jack Regan and Dennis Waterman played George Carter. The programme ran until 1978 and had two feature film spin-offs in 1977 and 2012.



### PART 1: STARTING POINTS – Media Language

**The various forms of media language used to create and communicate meanings.**

Semiotics can be used to analyse aspects of media language. Consider:

**Settings and locations:** The urban setting of London immediately connotes realism with a focus on the underbelly of urban society and gangland activity. The programme offers an unglamourised view of the capital. The pre-title sequence is filmed on a piece of waste land highlighting the use of real locations in the programme which would have been innovative at the time and part of the programme's appeal.

#### Visual codes

**Codes of clothing:** The connotations of characters' clothing and appearance create meanings. In *The Sweeney*, clothing is used to establish a hierarchy: Haskins wears city wear of the time including a formal suit and black overcoat, Regan and Carter as detectives are not in uniform but are less formal. The 'villains' are also clearly demarcated through clothing.

#### The relationship between technology and media products:

**Technical Codes:** The shots and editing suggest an attempt to create realism and distance the programme from earlier examples of the genre mainly filmed on sets. The technical codes also suggest the time in which it was made as they are more simplistic; the editing mainly relies on continuity editing and in some scenes there is clearly only one camera, for example in Jenny's



bedroom and sitting room in the opening scene. However, the film stock used and the location filming reinforce the more realistic feel of the programme, these techniques would have been different and refreshing for audiences of the time, involving them in the action.

**Audio codes:** There is limited use of music with the main audio codes being non-diegetic sound, dialogue and silence. The use of silence was innovative at the time and was used to create realism, for example when Regan is taking surveillance photographs of different members of the gang. Music then cuts in suggesting the narrative is moving forward. The non-diegetic soundtrack of the title sequence became iconic and synonymous with the programme's brand. Accents are used to connote hierarchy; the villains speak with a pronounced Cockney accent whilst DCI Haskins speaks with an RP accent. Dialogue also suggests rank, for example in one of the early scenes Haskins refers to the Beckett play *Waiting for Godot* which is not understood by the other officers, Carter states when asked who Godot is '*he plays full-back for QPR*'.

### Genre:

Although crime dramas have evolved over time, they have a recognisable set of conventions. *The Sweeney*, as an earlier example of the genre, clearly establishes a repertoire of elements that continue to be used in contemporary examples of the genre. These include:

- A **narrative** based on a crime that needs to be investigated and solved. This may conform to Todorov's theory where the structure is linear from the initial disruption through to a resolution, or non-linear where time and space is manipulated. *The Sweeney* has a linear structure and each episode had a different title and deals with a new crime. The narrative arc comes from the relationships between the characters.
- Binary oppositions that function as a narrative element. In *The Sweeney* this includes good vs evil, hero vs villain, police vs criminals and detectives vs police authority.

- A set of recognisable **character types** including a hierarchy with a boss (Haskins), a detective (Regan) and sidekick (Carter) and other characters, for example the criminals and Kemble, the gangland boss. In *The Sweeney* there is also a hierarchy within the criminal group with Frank Kemble as the boss, Dave Brooker as his sidekick with Billy and Stupid Hawes subordinate to both. The choice of name here is indicative of the time in which the programme is made and what constituted as appropriate.
- **Settings and locations** to establish realism including the police station, Jenny's house and a range of outside locations in London.
- **Iconography** related to the genre or to the character. For example, Kemble's house with elements of luxury and his framing in the leather chair behind a desk suggests his power over the others and the class divide between him and the gang members. This is further reinforced by the fact that he smokes a pipe, not cigarettes, and has a more refined accent. The guns reflect the narrative focus of several of the episodes on armed robbery or raids. The cars belonging to the 'Flying Squad' became iconic with connotations of chases and action.



### Theoretical perspective on narrative: Applying Propp.

This is a character-driven narrative theory which suggests that characters influence a narrative and communicate meanings through cause and effect, the narrative progresses as a result of their

actions. All characters have motives, these are revealed during the story arc and the narrative, according to Propp, is driven by the need to achieve their goals. Propp suggested there were a range of narrative roles, some of which can be applied to characters in *The Sweeney*:

Regan and Carter are **heroes** in that they solve crimes, arrest dangerous criminals and protect the community, but Regan, in particular is also an **anti-hero** as he is flawed - he drinks, smokes, challenges authority and does not always follow the rules. He is seen by his superiors to be a bad influence on Carter, referred to by Haskins as '*undisciplined and irresponsible*'. However, although he and Carter may use tactics to elicit information, it is clear that they are not corrupt and are ultimately 'good guys', one of the villains comments: '*This is The Sweeney, you don't buy them*'.

The **villains** are clearly established from the opening sequence. They are violent, hardened criminals who are used to getting what they want through violence and intimidation as seen in the unpleasant scene where Jenny is threatened with the iron.

There are a range of **sidekicks** in *The Sweeney*. Carter is Regan's partner; Kemble has a sidekick in Brooker and Billy has Stupid Hawes. They all have a clear role and advance the narrative in some way, for example Stupid Hawes reveals to Regan the connection between Billy and Kemble, and Regan realises his surveillance operation has been discovered. Carter covers for Regan and shows loyalty to him rather than Haskins. Jenny is the **princess/damsel in distress**, she is barely seen in the opening scene and is threatened by the gangsters.

**Theoretical perspectives on genre, including principles of repetition and variation; the dynamic nature of genre; hybridity and intertextuality. Consider:**

- Television crime dramas are historically one of the most popular television genres. They are recognisable to audiences, fulfilling their

expectations and are useful in the marketing of the product.

- However, although crime dramas rely on repetition of common conventions, they also vary and introduce different elements (Neale). *The Sweeney*, whilst repeating the typical codes of earlier crime dramas, for example *Z Cars* and *Softly, Softly*, also introduced grittier elements including violence and action to appeal to the audience.
- Genres are dynamic, developing over time to reflect social and cultural change, for example the way in which *The Sweeney* addresses the changing perception of the police. *The Sweeney* also borrowed conventions from the popular American crime drama imports and paved the way for programmes like *Starsky and Hutch*.

### PART 2: STARTING POINTS – Representation

**How representations reflect the social, historical and cultural contexts in which they were produced.**

**Consider how media language is used to construct representations:**

*The Sweeney* clearly reflects the values and beliefs of 1970s society in terms of the representations constructed. The police are white heterosexual men reflecting the police force at the time, as are the criminals. Those in positions of authority wielding power and influence are also white men. Very little screen time is given to women in the programme.

**Representations of masculinity:**

**Regan** is the main character, we are introduced to him in the scene after the titles where, interestingly, he is dressed in Jenny's flowered dressing gown, looking at himself in the mirror. His attire suggests that he does not live with Jenny and had not planned to spend the night there, suggesting more relaxed morals. His usual clothing suggests his rank, but also is a little shabby, connoting his lack of care about his appearance, a stereotype of men of the time. He is tough and powerful and unafraid to use

violence when needed. This persona is reinforced by his dialogue: *'We're The Sweeney son and we haven't had any dinner, you've kept us waiting. So unless you want a kicking, you tell us where those photographs are'* which preempts the chase scene. He is not afraid to stand up to authority and frequently bends the rules whilst not being actually corrupt. As Haskins says of him: *'Everything seems to mould itself around Jack Regan's convenience'*.

**Carter** is Regan's side kick/partner establishing a 'buddy' scenario whereby he covers for Regan. Regan relies on Carter and his local knowledge to solve crimes. He also often lightens the mood with humour and is generally represented as a more stable character. He does however engage in violence and, along with Regan, always solves the crime and catches the criminal.

### **The members of the gang and their leader**

**Kemble** demonstrate stereotypical characteristics of villains recognisable across examples of this genre in film and television. This representation is constructed through visual codes including their clothing, language and iconography, for example

their access to weapons and their involvement in organised crime.

### **Representations of women:**

This reflects the time in which the programme was made when women did not hold high ranks in the police force which was very male dominated. The only time a female police officer is seen is in a caring role when she arrives to protect Jenny after she has been threatened.

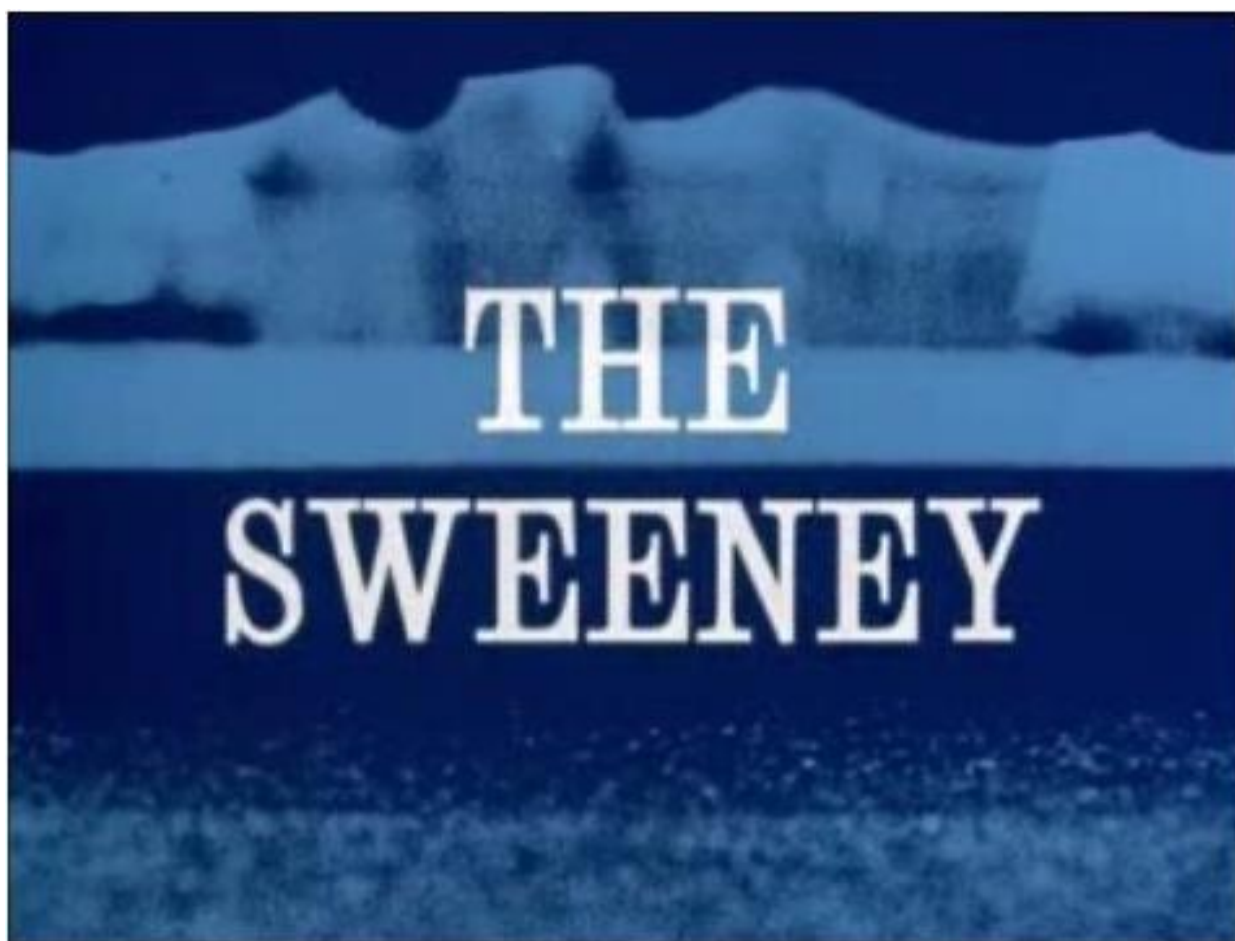
**Jenny** is represented very much as the victim. In the early scene we hear rather than see her as she is under a duvet. She is threatened by members of the gang and needs the protection of Regan although her relationship with him is unclear and does not warrant time in the narrative. In the final scene she is subservient to Regan as she is on the floor and he is on the chair in a protective role.

**Edi** is the only other women with dialogue in this episode and while she is feistier than Jenny and more street wise, she is still portrayed as long-suffering. She does not know where her husband is or that he has returned to a life of crime. She appears to have a grudging respect for Regan.

# The Sweeney

(Series 1 Episode 1, 1975)

Factsheet 2 - Media Industries, Audiences & Media Contexts



## Acknowledgements

All quotes from dialogue: *The Sweeney* Series 1, Episode 1 (1975), ITV.

Images	Acknowledgement
All images	Freemantle Media / ITV

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# The Sweeney

## (Series 1 Episode 1, 1975)

### Component 2: Understanding Forms and Products

#### Focus Areas:

Media Language

Representation

Media Industries

Audiences

Media contexts

#### PART 1: STARTING POINTS – Media Industries

##### The nature of media production, including by large organisations:

- The programme was produced by Talkback Thames using the Film Production Unit Euston Films with a focus on high production values. Each episode cost in excess of £250,000 to make and was filmed on a strict ten day shooting schedule.
- *The Sweeney* was the most popular product made by Euston Films.
- Thames Television was one of the regional franchise holders of the ITV network broadcasting in the London area from 1968-1992.
- *The Sweeney*, produced by ITV, a commercial broadcaster, presents a different production and distribution model to *Luther*, a BBC production.

##### The importance of different funding models:

*The Sweeney* was broadcast on ITV, which in 1974 was the UK's only Independent Television Channel that relied on advertisements to fund the production of television programmes. The viewing figures for each episode would have guaranteed ITV valuable income from advertisers who wanted to place commercials in the breaks. The success of *The Sweeney* was therefore

important to Thames Television and the ITV in terms of raising revenue.

##### The functions and types of regulation in the media:

*The Sweeney* was broadcast by ITV in the post-watershed 9pm slot. The characters were part of the Metropolitan Police's 'Flying Squad' suggesting that the narrative would contain mature themes regarding violence and theft. There is mild swearing and some references to sexual activity, but this was restrained even given the later scheduling time, reflecting the social and cultural context of the 1970s. The DVDs were given a 15 rating.

#### PART 2: STARTING POINTS – Audiences

- The initial appeal of the programme was the fact that it offered a different, more realistic representation of the police force, one that more accurately mirrored the stories that were appearing in the press at the time. The programme also had the added appeal of the humour created through the relationship between Regan and Carter.
- The filming style and action scenes would have appealed to fans of the crime genre who were ready for something different and more contemporary.
- Some of the takes are much longer than in contemporary examples of the genre, this was similar to more serious dramas of the time where audience concentration is expected.
- As the series developed over the years the audience became involved with the two main characters which contributed to the continued success of the programme.



- At the height of its success it was pulling in 19 million viewers per episode.
- The ongoing popularity of the programme is evidenced in the two film spin-offs produced, one in 1977 and one as recently as 2012

### Theoretical perspectives on audience: Blumler and Katz's Uses and Gratifications theory:

There are several theories that have been written to explore the relationship between audiences and media products. The Uses and Gratifications theory was one of the first to suggest that audiences can be active consumers of the media and seek out and use different media products in order to satisfy a need and to experience different pleasures including:

- **Entertainment/diversion:** audiences watch some media products including crime dramas to escape from everyday life into a fictional world that absorbs their interest. *The Sweeney* was entertaining and was a refreshing change from some of the other crime dramas broadcast at the time as it challenged the reassuring image of the police. It also had the added excitement of action including car chases and shoot outs which would have usually only been seen in film.
- **Information/education:** crime dramas can give audiences an insight into another area of society with which they may not be familiar, in *The Sweeney* this was police procedures. The insight into London gangland would have reinforced pre-conceived ideas audiences may have from real life stories of gangsters, for example The Krays.

### PART 3: STARTING POINTS – Media Contexts

The specification requires learners to develop their understanding of relevant contexts of media and their influence on the product.

#### Historical Context

*The Sweeney* demonstrates how genres develop over time. The programme introduced a more gritty, realistic representation of the police force informed by cultural influences including press stories and American crime drama imports. This

view challenged the more reassuring image of the police evident in other examples of the genre such as *Dixon of Dock Green* and *Z Cars*.

The programme also looked different to previous crime dramas, it was shot on 16mm film to achieve a washed out, grainy feel to the images, creating a more gritty realism.

*The Sweeney* reflected the time in which it was made as in the 1970s the actual Flying Squad were in the news after reports of bribery, corruption and consorting with gangland criminals.

The programme was produced before the 1984 Police and Criminal Evidence Act was passed which provided a code of practice for the exercise of police powers. Before that, there were few restrictions on the methods that could be used by the police to secure a conviction. For example, when Regan exhorts information from Billy through violence and suggesting that they can frame him.

#### Social and cultural contexts

How *The Sweeney* reflects the society and culture of the time in which it was made through its representations, themes, values, and messages. Consider:

- *The Sweeney* tells us a lot about the society of the time in terms of social hierarchy, power, gender roles and how authority was regarded.
- The men in the programme were macho, sexist and in positions of power. Their lives were seen to be exciting, appealing to the male audience of the time. They often broke the rules and engaged in violence.
- Although Regan and Carter are depicted as good at heart, their often dubious ways of getting information potentially reflected the culture of the Metropolitan Police of the time. In 1972 a new Commissioner for the Met, Sir Robert Mark was appointed to investigate corruption in the London force. He described the CID as 'the most routinely corrupt organisation in London'

(<https://www.thehistorypress.co.uk/articles/the->



[sweeney-the-dirty-squads-police-corruption-and-sleaze-70-s-style/](#)). During his investigation 50 officers were prosecuted and 478 took early retirement.

- The programme reflected the inequality between men and women in society. The majority of police officers seen are men and the roles for women in the programme were frequently that of the victim or sexual temptress.
- The programme changed the way in which crime dramas would be made in the future and audience expectations. It was said to be

influential in the creation of *Life on Mars* and *Ashes to Ashes*.

- It became culturally iconic with quotes from the series passing into popular usage. It was also mentioned in the songs *Wow!* By Kate Bush and *Cool for Cats* by Squeeze illustrating its place in popular culture.
- The programme referred to the Kray twins, actual East End gangsters to establish credibility and make cultural links. Carter says about Kemble: '*He's hard. He's one of the few that The Twins left alone.*'

## TLC, 'Waterfalls' (1995)

<https://youtu.be/8WEtxJ4-sh4>

Subject content focus area

Media language

Representation

Contexts



### Background context

- TLC is an all-girl R&B/hip-hop group; at the time of the release of 'Waterfalls', the members were Tionne 'T-Boz' Watkins, Lisa 'Left Eye' Lopes and Rozonda 'Chilli' Thomas.
- 'Waterfalls' is a track from their second album, *CrazySexyCool* (1994), and achieved international success, reaching number one in many territories. It's also considered to be one of the band's signature tracks.
- The group was originally formed as a fusion of R&B and hip-hop (a hybrid that became popular in the 1990s). TLC combined the smooth and soulful elements of R&B and the tougher, more 'street' approach of rap, to create a girl group with a 'tomboy' image.
- Unlike many girl groups, TLC had more of a 'rock 'n' roll image'. In the press, they were honest about their individual battles with addiction, police arrests (Lopes burned down her boyfriend's house following an argument), abusive relationships and their spats with each other. These issues were often explored in their music, arguably making TLC more 'gritty' than other R&B acts.

- In 2002, Lopes was killed in a car accident, but the remaining members of TLC continue to record and tour as a duo.

## Part 1: Starting points - Media language

- 'Waterfalls' blends three music video genres: **performance**, **narrative** and **conceptual**.
- There are two clear **narratives** with characters and situations that directly relate to the lyrics of the song: in the first verse, a young male dies during a drug deal and, in the second verse, an adult male contracts HIV (which develops into AIDS) following unprotected sex.
- There is some clear **illustration** of the lyrics (where the images show the literal meaning of the words); for example, there is a mother literally gazing out of a window at her son and a man literally doesn't recognise his own reflection.
- **Intercut** with the narrative sections are shots of the members of TLC **performing** the song and dancing in sync; demonstrating typical codes of the music video form. These performance sections use multiple **formal conventions**: **close-ups** of their faces, **direct address**, and in terms of **editing**, dance moves cut to the rhythm of the music.
- There are also some more **abstract** elements in the video. The band members first appear like water spirits, liquid versions of themselves (this is an intertextual reference to the 'liquid metal' T1000 in *Terminator 2*). Bookending each section, there is also a **montage** of flying imagery, with natural and urban landscapes zooming past. **Special effects** are used to portray the ghostly characters of the mother and son, and the symptoms of the man's disease. This use of CGI (computer-generated imagery) adds an almost supernatural element to a song about very real social issues.
- The **mise-en-scène** in each narrative section suits the different themes:
  - Typically, inner-city **sets and locations** (the brownstone house, stoop and street corner) have connotations of a 'ghetto' and the **costumes** (baggy tracksuits, baseball caps, dark glasses) **connote** a dangerous urban environment. These elements of the mise-en-scène could also demonstrate intertextual links to films of the 1990s like *New Jack City* and *Boyz 'N The Hood*.
  - In the HIV/AIDS narrative, the **iconography** of the romance genre is used: attractive semi-naked actors, silk stockings, tangled sheets and large mirrors; yet these swiftly become threatening and horrific to show the symptoms of the disease (the over-exposed image of the man's face and glowing eyes resemble the transformation scene from a **horror movie**).
- **Symbolism is used to communicate meanings through connotation.** Drugs aren't explicitly shown, and neither is any clear HIV diagnosis – instead, drugs are symbolised by a brown paper bag, and AIDS by skin deterioration and a montage of photos of the female's previous boyfriends.



- **Special effects** (SFX) are also used to balance the gritty realism of the narratives with something almost magical. The opening shot appears if we are falling from space (possibly connoting an angel), and TLC members appear first as beings made from water. This links explicitly to the title and metaphors of the song (whose meaning has been a topic of debate). The mother appears as a 'ghost' trying to prevent her son from approaching the gang; and the son later appears as a 'real' ghost that the mother can't see. The SFX in the HIV narrative make the disease seem more like a magical curse than a sexually transmitted illness. This alters the tone of the song, and makes it more **expressionistic** than **naturalistic**. Expressionism is an artistic movement where inner emotions (as opposed to external realities) are explored, often in an abstract way.

## Media contexts - Cultural

- Many R&B videos focus on romantic narratives and, often, hip-hop videos feature groups of men celebrating their wealth often achieved through crime. 'Waterfalls' references these **genre conventions** by showing the temptations of both sex and crime. Its overall **message** is less glamorised and more **cautionary** than many videos in this genre.
- In the 1990s, there was a lot of public concern and media coverage of the song's two issues - the spread of HIV/AIDS (at that point a deadly condition) and the escalation of street violence related to drug gangs. 'Waterfalls' attempts to explore these through two tragic but sympathetic narratives: a young black man trying to make easy money despite the worries of his mother; and a couple whose lack of safe sex leads to their deaths.
- TLC were the second-biggest girl band of the 1990s after the Spice Girls, who had a similar message of female solidarity and **empowerment**. The song could fall into the sub-genre of '**socially aware**' hip-hop that explores real-life issues but in a sympathetic way, rather than glamorising damaging lifestyles. Many 'gangsta' rappers (such as Ice T, NWA and Notorious BIG) also produced songs about the difficulties of poverty, crime and peer pressure, but 'Waterfalls' feels more emotional and nuanced than these 'ghetto fables'. The video sends its messages using the style of **expressionism** rather than **social realism**.

## Part 2: Starting points - Representation

- **Age** is represented quite **stereotypically** in the video. The young man is portrayed as well-meaning but impulsive, ignoring the fears of his mother, who is represented as wiser, concerned and loving. The young adult couple in the other narrative are shown as wealthy (through the use of media language in the mise-en-scène of the bedroom) and sexually active, but ultimately irresponsible.
- TLC themselves are represented as being almost supernatural beings. They manifest from the water-based geographical features in the chorus of the song (lakes, oceans, and an actual waterfall). Once in 'human' form, their costume and make-up create a **complex representation**

**of gender:** parts of their image are **traditionally feminine** (make-up accentuating eyes and lips, colourful costumes and skimpy tops baring their slim midriffs). However, some elements are more **masculine:** such as the loose-fitting trousers that are similar to combat pants and hide their legs (women's legs are something on which many hip-hop/R'n'B videos obsessively focus).

- **Social issues** are represented sympathetically, linking to the band's comment that they wanted to send a message "without preaching". The young black man is not a typical gangster, but rather represented as someone trying to make easy money to help his family (he gives a 'call me' hand gesture to show he still cares about his mother). He becomes a victim of the violent black male gang members (who do reinforce ethnic and gender stereotypes through the use of props, dress and gesture codes). The sexuality of the couple is first represented as glamorous and intimate, and the multiple close-ups of the man as he begins to become ill encourage our empathy rather than condemnation.

# Justin Bieber

## Intentions (2020)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3AyMjyHu1bA>  
(short version)

### Subject content focus areas:

- **Media language**
- **Representation**
- **Contexts**
- **Media industries**
- **Audiences**

### Background context

- *Intentions* was released in February 2020 as the second single from Justin Bieber's fifth album, *Changes*.
- The music video premiered on Bieber's YouTube channel on the same day as the song and features guest vocals from American rapper Quavo.
- The video was directed by Michael D Ratner, who founded OBB Media, a company with divisions in film, television and online promotions.
- The video was shot on location at Alexandria House and at one of the libraries at California State University.
- Alexandria House is a non-profit organisation in Los Angeles that provides shelter and support for vulnerable women and children.
- The longer version of the video includes more documentary footage from Alexandria House and uses voiceovers taken from interviews with the three women featured. The founder of the shelter also talks about her intentions: 'to speak truth to power, to speak about the injustices and the need for equity'.
- Bieber set up an 'Intentions Fund' to help the women and children of Alexandria House, donating \$200,000.

### Part 1: Media language

- The video is largely concept based, following the narratives of three women from Alexandria House in LA who all have particular intentions to help others. Bieber and Quavo's visit to the shelter introduces the performance aspect of the video, but only parts of the song are performed by the artists, with most of it being used as a soundtrack to the women's stories. This focus on the people in the shelter highlights the purpose of the video – to raise awareness and funds for a charitable organisation.
- Dance is an important aspect of the video and is featured in many of the shots and settings. The dance scenes are primarily used to convey the happiness shared by the community at the shelter and the joy that Bieber and Quavo's visit brings, rather than showcase the music artists, who are seen dancing with the community. This more spontaneous dance, including a child dancing on a table and Bhari dancing in the street with her friends, reflects the documentary style of the video and challenges choreographed dancing, which is a typical convention in music videos.
- Gesture codes act as important signifiers in the video with hugs, smiles, high fives and hands on shoulders all chosen to signify the importance of emotional support. Hugs between women and children and between friends and family in the shelter are used to convey love and care and construct the strong sense of community in Alexandria House. Shots of Bieber and Quavo hugging the main characters also represent the artists positively, showing them as caring



and emotionally demonstrative. High fives are used by each of the three main 'characters' at particular moments; this motif conveys their confidence and achievements.

- The three main 'characters' in the video – Bahri, Marcy and Angela – are quickly established through choices of settings, gesture and props. The shot of Bahri studying with *An Introduction to Criminal Justice* book in the foreground clearly signifies her 'intention' to study and help others. Meanwhile, Bahri and Marcy are both shown in the library setting, which is used to highlight the importance of access to education as a means to overcome challenging life circumstances.
- Bahri's narrative strand is developed through the shots of her waiting for the bus and studying on the long journey home at night, conveying the struggles and challenges she faces to succeed and achieve her goal.
- Bieber and Quavo act as 'helpers' to the three heroes of the narrative (Propp), gifting Bahri a car, Marcy and her friends backpacks of school supplies and Angela studio air-time, each chosen to help them on their journey towards fulfilling their 'intentions' to help others. The moments when the artists arrive on the scene to help each of them include tears and hugs to demand an emotional audience response and show that Bieber and Quavo also have good 'intentions'.
- The graffiti-style font for the song title and the characters' names has connotations to the rap or hip-hop genre and would be a recognisable signifier for fans of this genre; it also reinforces the urban setting for the video.
- The posed 'family' group shot at the end of the video, combined with the 'Thank You' message on screen, reminds the audience of the purpose of the video and represents the ethnically diverse community the charity is supporting in a positive way. The music artists are represented as part of this community, with Quavo hugging a child and Bieber in the centre of the group.
- place of safety, warmth and community through the multiple shots of women and children from different ethnic groups hugging, dancing and eating together. The *mise-en-scène* reinforces this with the selection of shots showing the 'welcome' banner and children's art work on the walls.
- At the start of the video, the scenes in which Marcy is doing her hair and make-up looking in the mirror arguably reinforce stereotypes of young women being concerned with physical appearance. However, perhaps in this context, the scenes represent the insecurities and lack of confidence many young women feel when 'representing' themselves to the world.
- The wide shot of Bhari in the centre of a line of girls from the shelter represents women as stronger through their support of each other and as a diverse community. Women are not objectified or glamourised as is still conventional in music videos. Instead, the focus is on their empowerment through their educational / creative / artistic achievements. On top of this, they are represented as active rather than passive. This is shown through the activities they are shown engaging in such as studying, travelling independently and connecting with others.
- Many issues are represented in the video, especially education and the role it plays in people's empowerment. The theme of community is key in the video's message, constructed through multiple shots of Bhari, Marcy and Angela helping and educating others. Homelessness is also represented through the shots of Angela supporting homeless people on the streets of LA.
- The shelter featured is portrayed as a home to women and children, representing them as victims in need, who have been in crisis and need safety. This is arguably reinforcing stereotypes, but in the context of *Intentions*, the representation of this social group is empowering as they are on a journey towards stability and independence through group support.
- The shots of Bieber performing in direct mode

## Part 2: Representation

of address in his red hoodie in the centre of the frame and Quavo rapping in the centre of the group outside represent them as ‘stars’, whose presence and acts of kindness at the shelter cause huge excitement. The two artists also hug near the end of the video, further representing them as supportive and caring.

- Bieber’s lyrics ‘Don’t need a sponsor, nope, you the brand now’ and generous acts are arguably undermined by him wearing one of his own ‘Drew House’ brand hoodies in the dancing scene at the end of the video, in an act of self-promotion.

## Media contexts – social and cultural

- Bieber has spoken about the background of the video, explaining that he wanted to ‘shine a light on issues that people are often overlooking’ (MTV interview).
- Through its support of Alexandria House, the video reflects the social contexts of campaigning for racial and gender equality. Justin Bieber has used his social media accounts, especially Instagram, to post images in support of #BlackLivesMatter and International Women’s Day.
- Some audiences have drawn comparisons between *Intentions* and Drake’s *God’s Plan*, a video in which the Canadian rapper donates money to fans, and David Dobrik’s (YouTuber and friend of Bieber) car give-away videos on YouTube, reflecting cultural influences on the video.
- Bieber and Quavo performed an acoustic version of the song at an event organised by Global Citizen on 27<sup>th</sup> June, 2020, which was launched in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. ‘Global Goal: Unite for our Future’ was a virtual event hosted by Dwayne Johnson during which musicians performed to spread awareness of social justice and human rights, in particular the impact of COVID-19 on marginalised communities. It raised \$6.9 billion from 41 countries towards a covid vaccine.

## Part 3: Media industries

- Born in Canada, Bieber was discovered on

YouTube after his mother posted home videos of him, and after a chance meeting with Usher, Bieber was signed to Island Def Jam in 2008 at the age of 14.

- Bieber’s big mainstream break was his hit single *Baby* in 2010, which has become one of the most viewed videos on YouTube.
- By 2013, Bieber had achieved five number one albums on the Billboard 200 chart – the youngest artist to ever do so at the age of 19.
- The director of the video, Michael D Ratner, also directed the *Justin Bieber: Seasons* docuseries for YouTube, which broke the record for YouTube Originals as most viewed premiere ever, with 32 million views in its first week.
- The title of the song was revealed in an episode of the *Justin Bieber: Seasons* docuseries where *Intentions* was written on a note on a board listing potential tracks from *Changes*. This reflects the role digital convergence plays in contemporary music promotion.
- Bieber used social media to promote the song’s release, posting a tweet stating ‘Big announcement tomorrow’ on the 5<sup>th</sup> February, 2020, followed by a short teaser trailer from the video on the 6<sup>th</sup>, the day before its release.
- The video was promoted on MTV’s YouTube channel, which featured an interview with Bieber and Quavo where they discussed the meaning of the song.
- The song was Quavo’s third top ten single in the US, all of which have been from collaborations with Bieber.
- The Korean entertainment conglomerate Hybe, whose record label signed BTS, did a merger deal in 2021 with the US company Ithaca, who manage Justin Bieber, Ariana Grande and Demi Lovato.

## Part 4: Audiences

- Bieber has a huge following on YouTube with 64.1M subscribers (July 2021), making him the all-time most subscribed artist on YouTube music.

- Bieber appeals to a mass global audience of popular music fans. Earlier in his career, Bieber's music targeted the teenage girl demographic, but his primary audience is now older (18-30), as his fans have grown up with him.
- Bieber has also become a fashion influencer for men through his outfits and his own 'Drew House' brand of clothing.
- Bieber's fans are known as 'Beliebers', which was named as one of the best new words of 2010 and #Belieber is frequently used by fans on Twitter.
- Bieber is well-known for his collaborations with rap artists including Chance the Rapper, DJ Khaled and Quavo, all of which have widened his audience appeal to fans of the hip-hop genre.
- There was a positive critical response to the song and video. *Intentions* was named the 32<sup>nd</sup> best song of 2020 by Billboard and was nominated for 'Best Pop Video' at the 2020 MTV Music Awards.
- Another positive response to the video was the increase in donations to the women's shelter featured in the video. It helped to raise over \$10,000 for Alexandria House in the first three days after its release.
- In terms of uses and gratifications theory, audiences are likely to use the video for personal identity and catharsis due to its emotive nature. It could also fulfil the audience's need for entertainment through the feel-good scenes of dance and celebration. It provides information and education about social issues including homelessness and encourages social interaction through fans' comments and sharing on social media.
- The message at end of the video is a direct appeal to audiences to donate to the 'Intentions Fund' set up by Bieber.

## Useful links

### Long version of video

[Justin Bieber – Intentions ft. Quavo \(Official Video\) – YouTube](#)

### MTV interview

[Justin Bieber: First Interview After Dropping Intentions \[ Ft. Quavo \] | Talk About Intentions – YouTube](#)

### Article on Hybe/Ithaca merger from *The Guardian*

[BTS' Korean record label buys Justin Bieber management company | Music industry | The Guardian](#)

## Taylor Swift, 'Bad Blood' (2015)

<https://youtu.be/Qcly9NiNbmo>

Subject content focus area

Media language

Representation

Media industries

Audiences

Contexts

### Background context

- 'Bad Blood' was released in May 2015. It was the fourth single to be released from the album *1989* (2014).
- The single is a remixed version of the album track, with added guest vocals from Kendrick Lamar. It was premiered at the Billboard Music Awards.
- The video broke video-streaming service Vevo's 24-hour viewing record (accumulating 20.1 million views in its first day of release).
- It won Video of the Year and Best Collaboration at the MTV Music Awards. It also won Best Music Video Grammy Award.
- The video includes many references to popular action films of the past twenty years, contains captions and titles like a movie, and was marketed using 'teaser' posters featuring famous women from the ensemble cast, bearing the name of their character. This is a marketing technique often used in the film industry (e.g. *Pulp Fiction*) to introduce characters.
- Swift also posted stills and behind-the-scenes shots on her Instagram account to build expectations.
- Encouraged by comments by Swift on Twitter and Instagram, speculation was rife amongst fans about who the song is about. Many believed the target was Katy Perry, although the identity of the person has never been revealed.

### Part 1: Starting points - Media language

- The setting for the video is modern-day London, and Swift's secret training facility beneath the streets.
- The colour palette for the video is mostly shiny and reflective black and white. As the narrative builds, more reds begin to appear, perhaps foreshadowing the change in Swift's hair colour.



The final confrontation is lit by massive explosions and fire, in contrast to the cold, metallic monochrome of the earlier shots.

- The video would be a good example of a music video that blends the conventions of performance. Though there are no conventional dance routines, but Swift does sing the song and addresses us directly, although as if we are the person with whom she has 'bad blood'.
- Though not strictly dance performances, the video does feature lots of acrobatic fight sequences that have the rhythm and grace of a dance routine. Each fight scene is also a reference to a different movie, which builds a relationship with a wide audience who would recognise these intertextual elements.
- The direct address builds intimacy, though her tone and facial expressions are angry and threatening (in contrast with Swift's 'sweet girl' image).
- Other female pop stars like Lady Gaga, Katy Perry and Rihanna change their images from video to video, playing a range of 'characters' from vampire queens to aliens. Previously, Swift had maintained a consistent visual image through her videos, but in 'Bad Blood' she does the opposite, changing costume and hair colour in every shot and creating a sexy 'kick ass' action hero character at odds with 'sweet', girl-next-door image.
- The video is a good example of *intertextuality* (when an artist 'samples' and makes reference to other media products). The title font is similar to that of *Sin City* (2005); the robot lab to *Robocop* (both 80s and more recent remake); the fight scenes at the start and in the snow reference *Kill Bill* (2003); the female agents training and preparing for battle look like similar scenes/ locations/ characters from the *Hunger Games* (2012) and *Divergent* (2014) films; and the motorbike chase refers to *Tron* (1982). By referring to such a wide range of films, the video is targeting a wider audience than might usually listen to Swift, building a relationship with them.
- Action movie editing techniques are used throughout: balletic fights scene, moving from normal speed to slow motion within one shot; the combination of long shots (to see strength, skill etc.) and close-ups (to show emotion); match-on-action to emphasise the fluid skill of the fighters; and cross-cutting between the two sides as they approach for the final confrontation.

## Media contexts - Cultural

- 'Bad Blood' follows a trend amongst contemporary music videos to create something more like a feature film. The large budget, emphasis on action spectacle, and use of titles and captions construct the video as no mere piece of marketing, but as a media 'event' in itself. The teasers on social media and movie-style posters, as well as the 'premiere' during a major awards ceremony, added to the sense that this was a media 'event'.
- 'Diss tracks' are a popular form of song-writing: artists who have fallen out in 'real life' write songs attacking each other. Speculation about such songs builds audience engagement: fans take sides, and spats on social media make them feel they're involved and part of the artist's social circle.

- On recent tours, Swift has built on this connection with her fans with her #girlsquad. In her 'off-screen' life she has been photographed with leading actresses, models, musicians and writers, promoting a female solidarity. The video takes this idea and re-imagines her 'squad' as an army. This links to Dyer's 'Star Theory', where an artist's public image is consistent with her personal life, and represents values (here female power, confidence, solidarity) that the audience might share.

## Part 2: Starting points - Representation

- Gender is represented in a complex manner. The video opens with two female agents easily dispatching an army of male combatants, and throughout women are portrayed as strong, aggressive, highly-skilled and able to use advanced weaponry. These are traits we might typically associate with masculinity.
- However, Swift's character and many of the other women are feminised and sexualised throughout. Many of their weapons are hidden within traditionally feminine objects (a compact mirror, a handbag). The characters' costumes are tight-fitting, with almost all the women wearing stiletto heels and thigh-length boots. While these women are presented as empowered, they are also dressed in a manner that might reflect male fantasies.
- Nearly all the women also fulfil mainstream ideas of feminine beauty: slim, athletic, long-legged, big eyes and pouting lips, long glossy hair etc. Their make-up and costumes emphasise this. Feminist approaches might argue that the females are objectified (although they are certainly not passive).
- By contrast, the main male character, played by Kendrick Lamar, is fully dressed in 'cool' urban clothes (sunglasses, baseball cap) and isn't sexualised in any way. He also seems to be in charge of the technology (a male stereotype) and is often shown in split screen with Swift, as if he is her equal.

## Starting Points: Audiences

- The video has been viewed over a billion times on YouTube. The primary target audience is 16-24 year old females. The **mode of address** is created through the use of **direct address** and the **intertextual references** to popular culture.
- The inclusion of Cindy Crawford and the nods to *'Kill Bill'* and other films suggests that a secondary older audience was also targeted. The video could also be said to target a male audience through the use of familiar action film genre conventions.
- The audience was targeted by the online marketing campaign. The 18 'A list' celebrities, models and artists were revealed by Swift over seven days before the video's premier at the Billboard Music Awards. The age **demographic** of the celebrities varied from 18 to 51 to appeal to a wide demographic.



- The rumours that the song was written about Swift's relationship with Katy Perry potentially added to the video's appeal for audiences who might enjoy the speculation and controversy.
- The **intertextual** references create pleasure for the audience. Additionally, the video uses many **conventions** from the Superhero/Sci-Fi genres which would appeal to fans of those genres. The repetition of familiar conventions engages the audience.
- According to the **Uses and Gratifications theory** the video could offer escapism, entertainment and possibly personal identification with the situation.
- Audience responses: according to the **Reception Theory (Stuart Hall)**, the **preferred** reading of the video would be for the audience to accept the representation of Swift's **star persona**: that she is a strong independent female and an influential popular culture icon. A more **oppositional** viewpoint might be that the representations of females are overly sexualised.

## STARTING POINTS - Media industries

- At the time of the release of 'Bad Blood', Swift was signed to the independent label, Big Machine Records, and her music was distributed by Universal Music Group, one of the 'major' record companies.
- Swift had achieved mainstream success with her previous releases and was an established artist at the time of this release.
- The high budget video features many high profile performers and demonstrates **high production values** which influences audience expectations through use of CGI and visual effects.
- The marketing for the video was largely conducted online from Swift's various social media accounts using the hashtag #BadBloodMusicVideo. She released teaser posters featuring the cameo stars of the video.
- The artist's fans are called 'Swifties' - and Swift herself has trademarked this name for her various merchandise, from clothing to stationery to smartphone apps. The latter means her fans can access Swift's music (and videos, exclusive footage etc.) without using services such as Spotify and Apple. (Swift withdrew her music from Spotify for three years as the royalties that artists receive from this platform are very small and she is reported to have said 'It is my opinion that music should not be free'. (<http://bit.ly/2KuANM4>). She also planned to withhold her album '1989' from Apple Music until the company changed its policy with regard to paying royalties during subscriber trial periods.)