



Analytical toolkit for television

You will need to analyse television texts in terms of media language.

This will include:

- technical codes
- visual codes
- genre
- narrative

Mindshower – what would you expect to include for each of these headings.

- Then use the digital resource ‘Analytical toolkit’ to compare your answers with those suggested.

Technical codes recap quiz

Use the digital resource – ‘Technical codes Blockbusters’





What types of crime drama can you identify?

- Look at a TV listings magazine or use an online listings page such as the Radio Times <http://www.radiotimes.com/tv/tv-listings/>
- Identify and list the crime dramas in a week's viewing using the task sheets on the next two pages.
- Try to group them according to sub-genre.
- Then move on to hybridity. Identify any hybrid crime dramas with examples.



Crime drama





Crime sub-themes and sub-genres

Name of Crime Programme	Sub-genre



Hybridity

Crime Programme	Hybrid of...



Crime sub-genres –

To what sub-genre do the following programmes belong?



Crime drama hybridity –

What genre is combined with crime in...?





Genre – What are the codes and conventions of a crime drama?

- Think RESISTS
- Recurring situations
- Elements of narrative
- Style
- Iconography
- Settings
- Themes
- Stock characters

A crime genre text is one which has crime (including the preparation for, or aftermath of) as its central construct

5 Signifiers of the crime genres – RESISTS

Find 5 things for each of the RESISTS codes/conventions that audiences would expect to find in a crime drama. Check your answers against the list in the interactive resource 'Resists'.

Recurring situations	
Elements of narrative	
Style	
Iconography	
Settings	
Themes	
Stock characters	



Genre task – ‘Life on mars’ and the 70s ‘Cop’ Show

- Use the interactive resource ‘The 70s cop show’
- Watch the clips from The Sweeney
- Watch the “Cult Classics” trailer from ITV4 featuring 1970s shows “The Sweeney”, “Minder” and “The Professionals”.
- What conventions of the crime show, particularly the ‘70s cop show’ are evident?
- What is surprising for contemporary audiences about the attitudes displayed?



70s cop show task sheet

Recurring situations	
Elements of narrative	
Style	
Iconography	
Settings	
Themes	
Stock Characters	



Task: Watch “Life on Mars” Episode 1 and identify the generic signifiers in the text

- Identify the signifiers of the crime drama/70s “cop” show (use RESISTS)
- What other genres/generic features are evident? What makes it “different”?

Generic signifiers task sheet

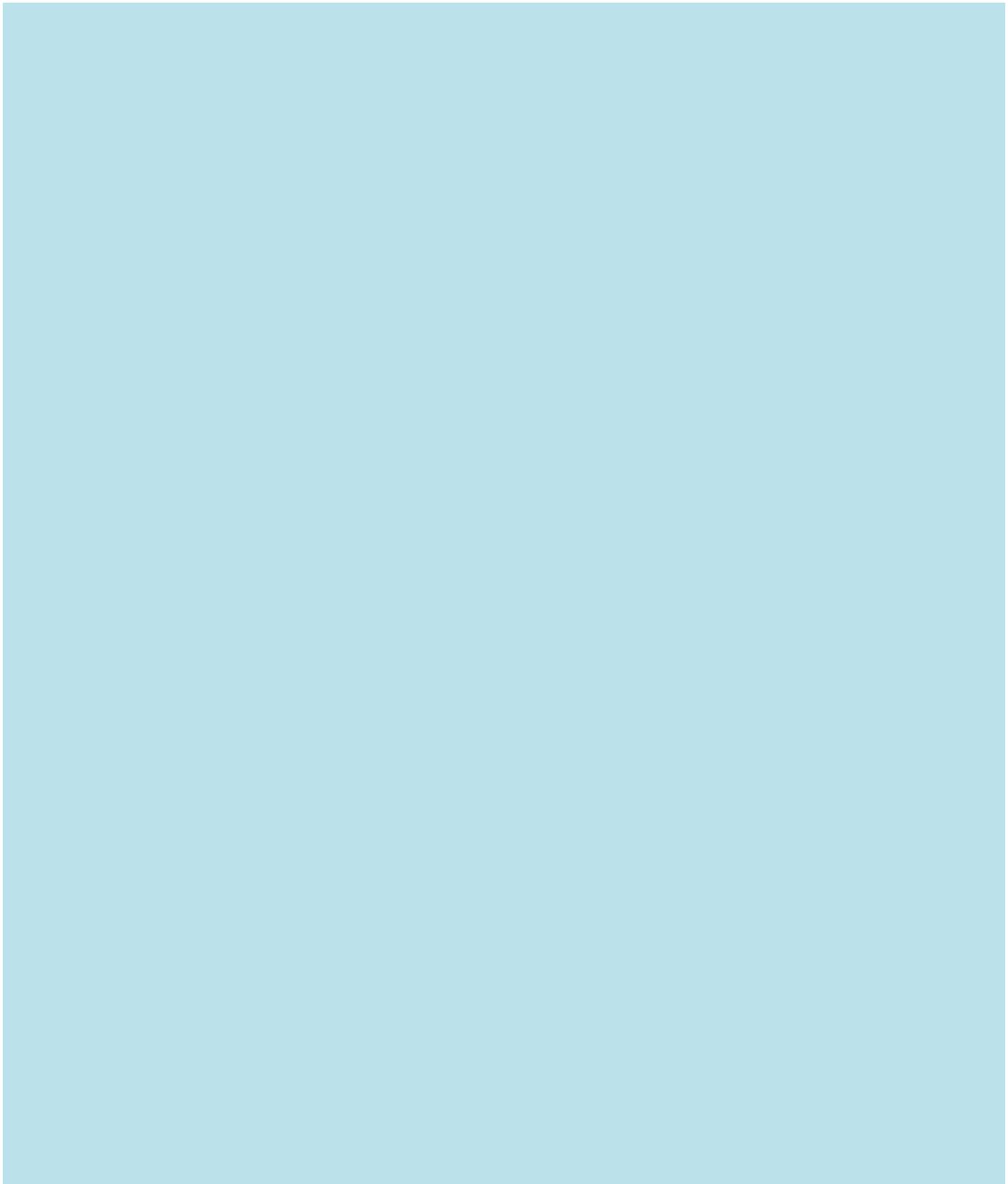
Recurring situations	
Elements of narrative	
Style	
Iconography	
Settings	
Themes	
Stock Characters	



Task: Hybridity & intertextuality

Identify any intertextual elements within Episode 1 of “Life on Mars.” Look at these elements and consider how they work in terms of media language (creating meaning), genre and audiences.

What is surprising for contemporary audiences about the attitudes displayed?





Genre Task – Repetition and difference (Steve Neale)

Alison Graham in the Radio Times called 'Life on Mars' 'a genuinely innovative and imaginative take on an old genre.'

(Graham, Alison (7–13 January 2006). "Today's Choices, Monday 9 January: Life on Mars". Radio Times. 328 (4266): 70.)

Use the reviews below as starting points. What is "old" in terms of genre and what is new, "innovative and imaginative"? Why has the genre changed/developed?

- Nancy Banks-Smith in The Guardian – 'an inspired take on the usual formula of gruff copper of the old school...and sensitive sidekick'

<https://www.theguardian.com/media/2006/jan/31/broadcasting.tvandrado>

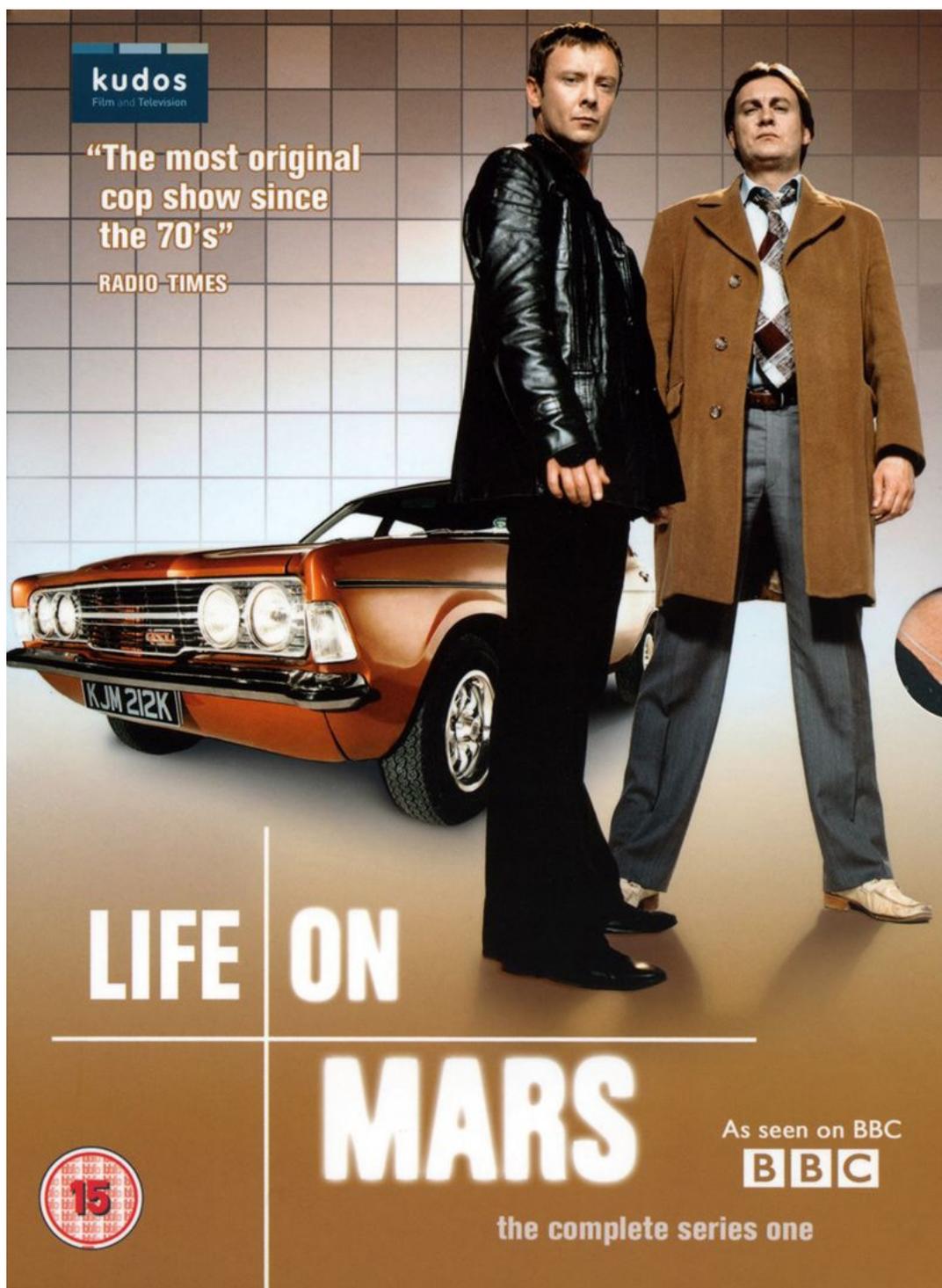
- Tim Goodman (San Francisco Chronicle) – 'a refreshing twist or two on tired cop dramas'

<http://www.sfgate.com/entertainment/article/With-intelligent-Life-on-Mars-BBC-delivers-a-2492468.php>



Genre: 'Life on Mars' Repetition and difference

Add your notes to the page and then check suggestions using the digital resource.





Post-modernism & ‘Life on Mars’

Baudrillard argues that the media create hyper-realities based on a continuous process of mediation. What is encoded as ‘real’ (and what we decode through media products) is not ‘real’ but instead a ‘simulacrum’ which offers us a hyper-reality (“A real without origin or reality” – Jean Baudrillard) that we accept as real because we are so consistently exposed to it.

Thus media images have come to seem more “real” than the reality they supposedly represent.

‘Our mental pictures of the perfect body, house, meal and sexual relationship have been created through exposure to constantly recycled media depictions that have no basis in fact – but it is these images that create our expectations’ (Em Griffen (2012) A First Look at Communication Theory, p319)

Lévi-Strauss suggested that media texts are now made up of “debris” that we recognise from other texts and these are combined – “bricolage”. This may be heard in e.g. a musical “mash-up” or remix.

“The Life on Mars universe is the name given to the fictional universe in which Life on Mars and the spin off Ashes to Ashes exist .” http://life-on-mars.wikia.com/wiki/Life_on_Mars_universe

Post Modernism

Some features of a postmodern text:

- Intertextuality – acknowledgement of existing media texts
- References to popular culture
- Bricolage
- Self-reflexive
- Parody/Pastiche (“pasted”)/Homage
- Irony
- Ambiguity
- Narrative fragmentation or temporal distortion
- Anti-realist

Use the printable cards and in groups give examples of these features in “Life on Mars” or use the task sheet on the next page.



Post-modern element	Example(s) from the text
Intertextuality – acknowledgement of existing media texts	
References to popular culture	
Bricolage	
Irony	
Anti-realist	
Narrative fragmentation or temporal distortion	
Self-reflexive	
Parody/Pastiche (“pasted”)/Homage	
Ambiguity	



How far is 'Life on Mars' a post-modern text?

- Elements of bricolage
- Relies on audience understanding of crime drama, specifically seventies cop shows to decode it. Give examples.
- Narrative is paradoxical and fragmented
- Uses intertextuality and cultural codes to create audience appeal through nostalgia. Give examples.
- Social, cultural and historical context: its construction requires us to look at 70s Manchester with 21st Century eyes and judge it accordingly.

How could we apply the concept of “simulacra” to 'Life on Mars'? Is what we are seeing hyperreal?

- The 70s world of Gene Hunt is a hyperreality –it is the 70s re-presented from a mediated perspective. Consider how this is constructed.
- Is Sam Tyler's 21st Century world also hyperreal? Based on our cultural perception of an institution (the police force) that is itself constructed rather than experienced first hand. How do we know that the police force is like this? It is based primarily on the way it is re-presented to us through the media.
- It may be argued that the series itself is a comment on the attractions of the hyperreal over the real - Sam Tyler creates his own “hyper-reality” (the Gene Hunt world) – and this continues through “Ashes to Ashes.”

Extended writing task:

How far can “Life on Mars” be defined as post-modern? Give reasons for your answer and refer to detailed examples from the text.



Task: Narrative – Tzvetan Todorov

Can you identify the various stages of the narrative in Episode 1 of *Life on Mars*?

- EQUILIBRIUM: The given state or balance of affairs before the...
- DISRUPTION: Disruption of the equilibrium (may stem from a catalyst)
- RECOGNITION: That there has been a disruption
- RESOLUTION: The attempts to restore the equilibrium
- EQUILIBRIUM: Restoration of a similar or changed state of affairs after the disruption has been resolved

Are all these stages completely realised in Episode 1? Why?

There should be cause/effect links throughout the narrative. Can you identify these?

Narrative

Opening episode acts as teaser for the audience - narrative is restricted to Sam's viewpoint.

TODOROVIAN STRUCTURE -

- EQUILIBRIUM -
- DISRUPTION -
- RECOGNITION -
- RESOLUTION -
- EQUILIBRIUM -

Would we expect full closure in an episodic drama? Cliffhangers?

Is there causality? Can you identify cause/effect links?



Binary opposites (Lévi-Strauss)

Binary Opposition (defined by Lévi-Strauss) – many oppositions are set up to drive the narrative and we watch to discover which side “triumphs” in the end.

Can you identify what is in “opposition” to the first word ?

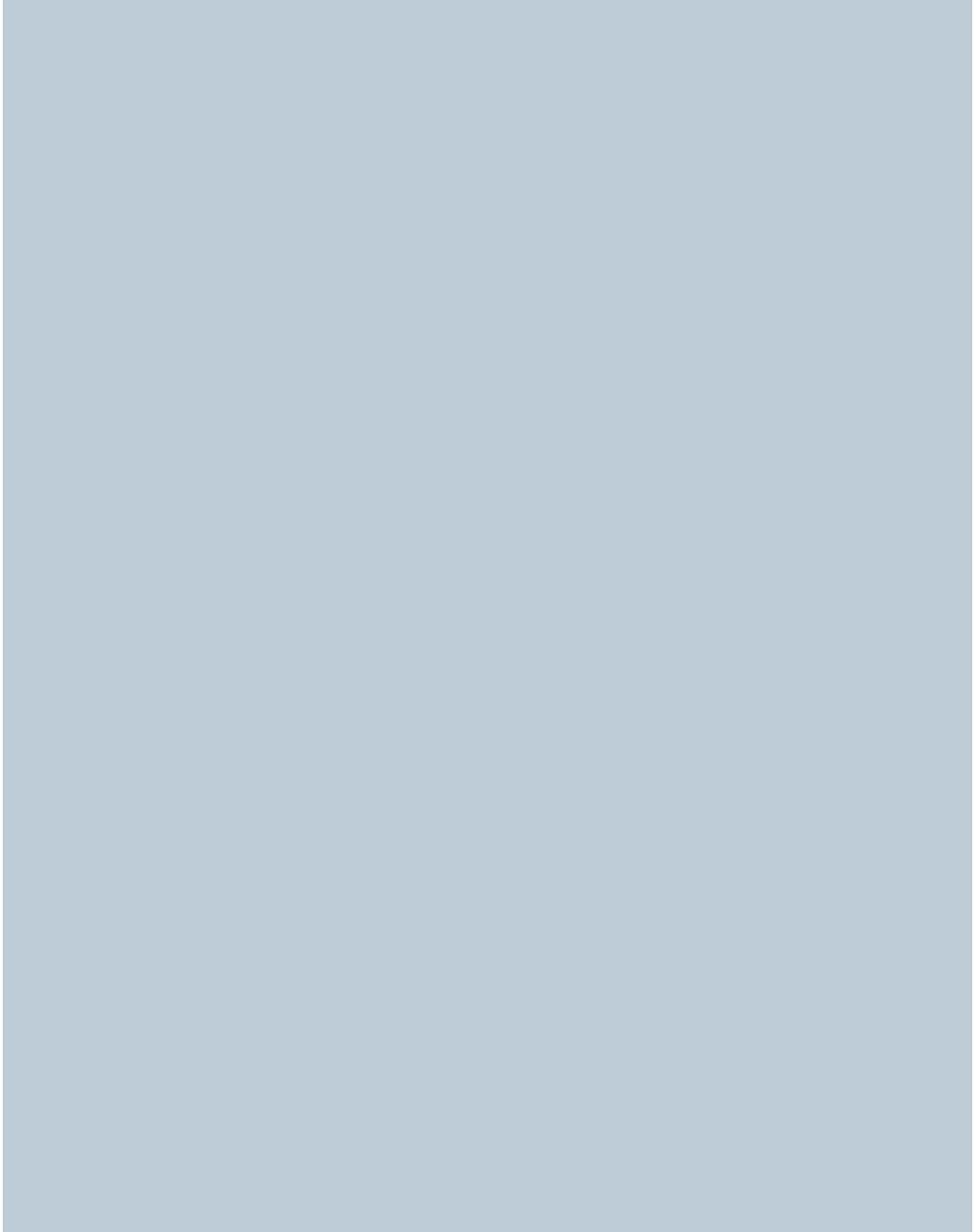
- Past v
- Illusion v
- New man v
- Psychology v
- Corruption v
- Sensitivity v
- Debate v
- Hunt v
- Hyde v
- Bigotry v
- Home v
- Annie v
- New policing v
- Vengeance v
- Forensics v
- Order v
- Psychology v
- Tyler v

Use the digital resource '**Binary opposites**' to check your answers



Story arcs/character arcs

There are several story arcs and narrative strands. Can you identify them?





Key questions for class discussion:

- Is the narrative entirely linear? If not, why not? Give examples.
- Does the episode have a flexi-narrative?
- Are there story arcs which run across the series/franchise?
- Are there obvious codes (Barthes) around which the narrative is structured? Give examples
- Is it realist?
- How are time and space manipulated within the narrative?

Narrative – Points you may have made

- 3 Act Structure? Simple, linear narrative (Sam's journey) but fractured by flashback/hallucination/audio – or is it?
- Part of larger narrative - only the beginning
- Linear/non-linear - is it? Flashback/forward. Often complex manipulation of time and space challenges audiences
- Surreal /anti-realist elements at times
- Intellectual puzzle for an active audience. Not "easy" viewing
- Investigative narrative - clues for the audience - enigmas/hermeneutics throughout. After Episode 1, each episode begins on an enigma (Tyler's VO)
- Often Proppian roles
- Plot driven, punctuated by clues which become narrative markers indicating the solution
- Denouement and satisfying conclusion
- Narrative - Is it a flexi-narrative? Characters are complex, storylines interweave, we question what is real and what isn't, it challenges the audience through enigma, confusion
- Use of vo as a plot device. Complex cutting between past/present e.g. mother's voice. Surreal elements of narrative at times. Sub-text and symbolic codes – e.g. Hyde.
- Clues, red herrings – Neil as hypnotherapist.
- It's a series so we expect an element of closure in the final episode. Here it occurs both at the end of series 2 when Sam chooses to stay in 1972 and jumps off the roof, and at the end of 'Ashes to Ashes' when all is revealed.
- There is an element of the circular narrative here which runs through the two . Title track is



playing during accident and also through the final episodes.

- Test card girl switches TV off at the end of Series 2, breaking the fourth wall
- Journey/quest structure - link to Campbell/Vogler
- Reinforcement of dominant ideology and hegemonic values : crime does not pay/ the police are trustworthy and in charge/ killers will be caught and you are safe.