



# Trigger Point

## (Series 2, Episode 1, 2024)

### Component 2: Exploring the Media

#### Focus areas

- Media language
- Representation
- Media industries
- Audiences
- Media contexts

#### Introduction

*Trigger Point* is a British crime drama series which premiered in January 2022 on ITV and ITVX. Series two began broadcasting in 2024 and a third was released on ITVX in 2025. Series four is scheduled for release in 2026.

The series is based around Lana Washington, an ex-military bomb disposal operative (or 'Expo') and Afghan War veteran, as she leads a Metropolitan Police bomb disposal squad dealing with terrorist threats.

### Part 1: Starting points – media language

We will look at:

- the various forms of media language used to create and communicate meanings in media products
- how choice (selection, combination and exclusion) of elements of media language influences meaning in media products
- the codes and conventions of media language and how they may vary over time
- theoretical perspectives on genre, including principles of repetition and variation; the dynamic nature of genre
- theories of narrative, including those derived from Propp.



## Genre

*Trigger Point* is a **crime thriller** and contains many recognisable **conventions** of this **genre**. The characters conform to our expectations of a crime thriller; for example, the troubled protagonist who is dedicated to their work (Lana Washington), the 'sidekick' Danny and the anonymous terrorists. Aspects of media language are also conventional of the genre. The settings are typical, including the urban city setting and specific locations within this, such as the police station, and dangerous locations, like the power station. The set episode features expected **iconography** of the genre as part of the **mise-en-scène**, for example technology, uniforms and protective equipment, explosions and dead bodies. The use of sound is also conventional. **Diegetic sound**, such as police sirens, bombs detonating and jargon in the dialogue, create a sense of **realism**, whilst **non-diegetic** music functions to generate a tense atmosphere.

*Trigger Point* also reflects the **dynamic nature of genres** and the way in which they balance familiar and new elements. This is evident through the **variation** of featuring a female protagonist in a historically male-dominated genre and role ("Great to see a woman in the job. And unusual" – Commander Francis). Another example of difference is the focus on a bomb disposal unit rather than the more typical police force.

## Narrative

The set episode includes key **narrative** elements of a crime thriller, such as **suspense** when Lana aims to defuse devices against the clock. Conventionally, **enigmas** are also created to maintain the audience's interest; for example, who are the terrorists and what are their motives? As is typical of an ongoing series, the set episode ends on a **cliffhanger** to encourage viewers to watch the next instalment.

**Propp's** ideas around narrative and **character types** can be applied to the set episode. Lana is the hero who defuses explosives and saves lives, Danny is the helper who supports her in this work and the terrorists are clearly the villains. In addition, Hassan fulfils the role of the dispatcher, Thom is the princess who is saved by Lana and Commander Francis is the false hero who interferes and has questionable motives.

## Part 2: Starting points – representation

We will look at:

- the choices media producers make about how to represent particular events, social groups and ideas
- the different functions and uses of stereotypes
- how and why particular social groups may be under-represented or misrepresented
- how representations convey particular viewpoints, messages, values and beliefs.



**Representations** of social groups, messages and issues in the set episode are **constructed** through media language. Stereotypical ideas around gender are challenged through the characters. Lana is represented as highly effective, determined and calm under pressure. This representation is created through, for example, her costume and the equipment she uses, which **connote** her significance within the squad. **Audio codes** reinforce this representation of Lana, as her **dialogue** and **vocal delivery** are clear, firm and authoritative. Stereotypical gender roles are reversed as Lana saves Thom from the room full of pressure plates. His **verbal and non-verbal communication** connote dependence, weakness and fear, whilst Lana's show composure, skill and bravery.

The set episode can also be seen to address the historical **under-representation** and **misrepresentation** of people from ethnic minority backgrounds in television drama. For example, Hassan is a British Asian Muslim and is represented as a highly competent and accomplished officer. Again, **stereotypes** are undermined here, as Hassan is shown fighting terrorism, rather than being represented as a terrorist himself. Similarly, the representation of Danny as a Black male challenges negative stereotypes of this social group; he has a significant role as Lana's colleague, who she values and trusts. White characters in the set episode are often represented less sympathetically or positively. John Hudson, for example, is disliked and not trusted by Lana because he expressed racist views and he appears arrogantly resistant to female authority.

### Part 3: Starting points – media industries

We will look at:

- the nature of media production, including by large organisations, who own the products they produce, and by individuals and groups
- the impact of production processes, personnel and technologies on the final product, including similarities and differences between media products in terms of when and where they are produced
- the effect of ownership and control of media organisations, including conglomerate ownership, diversification and vertical integration
- the impact of the increasingly convergent nature of media industries across different platforms and different national settings
- the importance of different funding models, including government funded, not-for-profit and commercial models
- how the media operate as commercial industries on a global scale and reach both large and specialised audiences
- the functions and types of regulation of the media.

#### ITV plc

ITV plc demonstrates many of the typical characteristics of large media organisations. It is a **conglomerate**, the **parent company** being ITV and its **subsidiaries** ITV Studios and Media & Entertainment. In this way, it is also a '**vertically integrated** producer broadcaster and streamer' (<https://www.itvplc.com/about-itv/what-we-do>), including both the **production** and **distribution** of content.



ITV Studios creates, owns and distributes content on a **global scale** across 13 countries, currently generating 59% of its revenue outside of the UK. ITV's **diversified** business model of developing, managing, owning and distributing content rights allows it to **maximise revenue**, competing with other transnational media organisations and maintaining a strong position in both global and domestic markets. ITV Studios is the biggest UK commercial producer and one of the top three in most international markets where it operates. ITV's other subsidiary, Media & Entertainment, is the largest commercial broadcaster and video on demand streamer in the UK, with a 32.2% share of commercial viewing.

(<https://www.itvplc.com/about-itv/what-we-do>)

### Personnel

Series one was written by a new and, therefore, unestablished writer, Daniel Brierley. This decision shows ITV's commitment to developing and supporting new talent. There is an element of risk involved in this as the producers cannot rely on the track record of the writer to create a successful product or attract audiences. This risk is, however, mitigated through certain strategies, such as the use of **established talent** to balance Brierley's debut. *Trigger Point* is produced by HTM Television, a UK production company owned jointly by executive producer Jed Mercurio and Hat Trick Productions (a British independent production company). Mercurio was the creator and writer of *Line of Duty*, a police procedural drama broadcast between 2012 and 2021 that was both critically and commercially highly successful. Vicky McClure, who plays Lana, also starred in *Line of Duty* and has an established **fanbase** from this and subsequent roles in, for example, *This is England*.

### Funding

The writer of the series, Daniel Brierley, received funding from a bursary provided by the industry body, ScreenSkills. As a show commissioned by the commercial broadcaster ITV, *Trigger Point* is financed through a **commercial model**. Specifically, the series is **funded** by **advertising revenue** generated from ITV's linear ITV channel and their advertiser-funded free streaming service, ITVX. Advertisers pay to advertise their products in commercial breaks during episodes of the series. ITV has a reputation for attracting large audiences to its output, which is appealing to advertisers whose target **demographic** matches *Trigger Point's* **target audience**. In addition, revenue is generated on ITVX through **sponsorship**, where the pizza chain Domino's pays to be associated with the streaming service and for its **branding** to be displayed on their website. This can be seen on the *Trigger Point* page of ITVX

([Trigger Point - Watch Episode - ITVX](#)).

### Convergence

From its origins in broadcast television, like most producers, ITV has also **diversified** into digital and online content. After rebranding from its previous titles, ITVX was launched in 2022 as ITV's free streaming service. As previously mentioned, ITVX is free to all users who pay the television licence fee as it is funded by, for example, advertising and sponsorship. ITV generate further revenue through ITVX Premium, a paid-for service that offers benefits including advertisement-free viewing, the ability to download shows to watch offline and access to additional content, such as the Britbox library which includes BBC and Channel 4 programmes, as well as ITV ones. *Trigger Point* can also be viewed through third-party streaming services, such as Amazon Prime Video, providing another revenue source.



ITV's emphasis on making its content available via streaming services reflects the **convergent** nature of the media industries. The **convergence** of different platforms and technologies enables ITV and *Trigger Point* to extend their audience beyond the **older demographic** of linear television, encouraging new, younger viewers to both the brand and the show, creating greater overall audience **reach**. The importance of this to ITV plc as a media organisation is clear. A total of 1,686 million streaming hours is currently recorded for ITVX, an increase from 1,506 million in 2023. *Trigger Point* was simultaneously premiered on ITV and ITVX, reflecting the continued growth of online streaming services, as well as being released on DVD. Making the product available in this range of ways enables the **producers** and **distributors** to increase revenue from it.

### Marketing

As ITV is a **commercial network** funded by advertising, it is especially important for their products to attract a large audience. The show was marketed using a combination of traditional and modern approaches to reach a diverse audience. **Guerrilla marketing** strategies were used to promote the show, such as projecting a countdown clock onto buildings in London to create a sense of anticipation for series one. Prior to the launch of series two, an immersive escape room experience was created, generating a buzz and excitement around the show's return.

### Regulation

ITV is **regulated** by **Ofcom** and all its content is required to meet Ofcom's regulatory requirements. IMDB rates *Trigger Point* as a 15 certificate in the UK, as it contains examples of violence, gore, and frightening and intense scenes [Trigger Point \(TV Series 2022-\) - IMDb](#). As a result, *Trigger Point* is broadcast on linear television after the 9pm **watershed** to protect younger viewers. Similarly, the *Trigger Point* page on ITVX includes guidance that the show 'contains scenes of terrorism and peril and some strong language' and allows users to turn on parental controls. The DVD release of the show is also classified as a 15 certificate for the above reasons.

## Part 4: Starting points – audiences

We will look at:

- how media organisations categorise audiences
- how and why media products are aimed at a range of audiences, from small, specialised audiences to large, mass audiences.

### Audience

As ITV is the longest running commercial channel on television, its programmes have tended to attract an older audience from lower **socio-economic groups** (C2, D, E). *Trigger Point's* age rating of 15 indicates an audience of adults and young adults. *Trigger Point* appeals to fans of the crime thriller genre through its use of recognisable conventions. The casting of Vicky McClure as Lana Washington would also appeal to **fans** of the **star**. The inclusion of a strong female protagonist would also appeal to audiences who value equality and diversity in representations of gender. Similarly, the set episode features characters from various ethnic backgrounds, which broadens its appeal to viewers of different ethnicities and those who appreciate diverse representations. The set episode attracted 6.36 million viewers in the UK ([Trigger Point \(TV series\) - Wikipedia](#)), a relatively large audience for a contemporary television product.



## Technology

As discussed in the media industries section, *Trigger Point* can be accessed in various ways. Older viewers (potentially 55+) are more likely to watch on linear television as the programme is broadcast, whereas a younger audience would be more inclined to access the show through ITVX or other third-party streaming services, including via mobile phones, laptops or other devices. These **on-demand services** allow audiences to choose how, when and where they engage with the show, potentially increasing their enjoyment.

## Pleasures and audience responses

*Trigger Point* offers audiences a range of pleasures, **fulfilling various needs and desires**. Some viewers may enjoy the familiarity of **genre conventions**, as well as the modern updating of those conventions. The diverse and more progressive **representations** of gender and ethnicity are also likely to appeal to some viewers. The inclusion of different elements, such as a romance **sub-plot** and a racist police officer, is also engaging, with audience members responding differently to these elements based on their own backgrounds and views.

## Uses and gratifications

Audiences may be actively involved with *Trigger Point* by, for example, **interacting** with the programme's series page on ITVX or ITV's social media, or discussing it with friends and family. In terms of Blumler and Katz's **Uses and Gratifications theory**, we could suggest audience members watch for various reasons, including:

- for **entertainment/diversion** from their everyday lives – the set episode includes drama and features characters with lives quite different from those of the audience
- to be **informed or educated** about issues raised by the series, such as terrorism, radicalisation and gender inequality
- for **social interaction**, discussing episodes with family or friends or by contributing to the conversation on X or sharing memes on Instagram
- for **personal identity**, to compare their life experiences with those of the characters.

## Part 5: Starting points – media contexts

The representations of women in traditionally male professions illustrates **changing gender roles** in society and the increased visibility of women in the media after several waves of **feminism**. The show also reflects evolving representations of masculinity. For example, the set episode shows male vulnerability through Thom's panic and fear when in the room full of pressure plates. Similarly, more diverse characters are now featured in the series in comparison to the almost exclusively white casts of crime thrillers in earlier years. This reflects contemporary **multiculturalism** and the greater awareness and recognition of the range ethnic groups within culture and society.

Narratives within the series also reflect the **contemporary historical context**, focusing on current issues, such as terrorism, radicalisation and gender politics. The representation of the police force reflects contextual changes in approaches to policing, which are now more sophisticated than those seen in earlier crime thrillers. Technology also features significantly in the set episode, mirroring the importance of technological developments in contemporary society. Examples include computer screens, drones, specialist equipment, high-tech bombs and mobile phones.