**Sitcoms Knowledge Organiser 2- IT Crowd**

**Media Language & Representation**

|  |
| --- |
| **Conventions matched** |
| * Recurring situation- **Workplace comedy**
* Recurring locations- **office ‘base’** and recurring characters- Moss, Jen, Roy & Douglas. Creates ‘Brand Identity’.
* Context of situation-unimportant, stuck in the basement- made clear to the audience
* Humor through conflict
* Characters desire escape or improvement
* They are ‘trapped’

Production* Multiple camera production- in front of a studio audience- with some external scenes filmed using single-camera techniques and then shown to the audience to generate the laughter

Types of Humor* Uses both visual and verbal humor
* Comedy mainly created though **exaggeration, mistaken identity** and **misunderstanding**

Narrative Conventions* Structure is cyclical- narrative is ‘reset’ at the end of the episode. Also the 3 narrative arcs mostly fit in with Todorov’s structure
* Includes a catchphrase from other episodes- ‘Have you tried turning it off and on again?’ – create brand identity and familiarity

Characters* Exaggerations of ‘nerd/IT worker’ stereotypes
* Same group of characters from season to season
* Minor characters- the windowcleaner, Prime, Negative One, Douglas

**Jen**- Domineering character. Also the 'straight’ character**Moss**- nerd/geek**Roy**- ‘everyman’ or the ‘straight’ character- maybe also the innocent/stupid character.* None of the characters express exaggerated features of masculinity/femininity- in fact, they subvert most conventions (see Representation)
 |

|  |
| --- |
| **Episode Summary** |
| Roy moves into his new flat and is then mistaken for a window-cleaner; and celebrity status for Moss comes easy when he reaches new heights on the renowned quiz show Countdown, leading to exclusive membership of the 8+ Club. Jen is envious to know just what is going on in the Heads of Department meetings where soft, white dressings gowns are involved. She's feeling very left out and eager to find out. |
| **Narrative arcs:** |
| * Roy- Window cleaner, leaving the bike & old school friend Alistair
* Moss- Countdown, Prime, 8+ Club and Street Countdown
* Jen- Shut out of the meetings, sneaking in
 |
| **Links to Narrative Theories: Todorov/Propp** |
| **Todorov: Equilibrium Theory**How do the narrative arcs of the 3 main character fit into the 5 stages of Todorov’s theory?1. **Equilibrium**
2. **Disruption**
3. **Recognition**
4. **Repair**
5. **New-Equilibrium**
 | **Propp: Character roles**Do the characters conform to or subvert any of Propps character roles?* The hero- the focus of the story, who sets off on a quest to complete a task
* The Dispatcher- someone who sets the scene and sends the Hero on their quest
* The villain- who opposes the hero and tries to stop them completing the task
* The Helper- an assistant who helps the hero on their quest
* The Donor- someone who gives the hero something to help them complete their quest
* The Princess- often the prize for the Hero once the task is complete
* The False Hero- at first he might seem like the hero, but is in fact working against the hero or for himself
 |

|  |
| --- |
| **Intertextuality** |
| **There are two main forms of intertextuality- Homage and Parody*** A **homage** may be a reference to a text, person or event that the writers, directors or even production company think highly of
* A **parody** is normally a humorous retelling of a serious or complex issue. The creators of a sitcom may do this to simplify complicated issues or lighten darker aspects of the narrative

**Examples in ITC*** The Matrix- Prime’s costume, the way he speaks to Moss as a ‘chosen one’, Prime’s extremely formal language
* Countdown- the set, host, format and main figures
* Fight Club- the idea of an underground club, the ‘first rule’ line
* Various props in the office linking to popular culture/nerd culture
* Rap videos- the slow-motion intro to 8+ with the music
 |

|  |
| --- |
| **Representation: cultural elements:** |
| **Nerd culture:**  |
| Stereotypes- two stereotypical figures of nerd culture. Moss- Formal, smartly dressed, lack of social skills, awkward, very intelligentRoy- lazy, sloppy, also socially awkward, casually dressedSetting- office full of popular culture/nerd references- toys and figures- idea of geeky/nerdy being childlike and not ‘adult’ |
| **Office culture** |
| IT department in basement- not considered important. Not invited to the meetingSeparation between management and workersSubverting conventions of management being profession- Douglas’ ‘workout club’ in the meeting room |
| **Representation of gender**  |
| The two male characters don’t fulfil any stereotypically male/masculine expectationsMoss begins to fulfil more typically (heterosexual) male behaviours when he is a celebrity in 8+The female character is their boss- subverting traditional gender stereotypes. She is however insecure and paranoid- perhaps conforming to traditional ideas of women not being suited to positions of power. |

|  |
| --- |
| **Representation of ethnicity** |
| **Diverse** cast- Roy is Irish, Moss is mixed race, Prime is played by an actor of Chinese descent. Asian characters are often presented as threatening or extremely smart- Prime initially seems threatening or mysterious, but is revealed to be a former winner- showing him to fulfil the stereotype of being smart. This diversity is representative of the diversity of London where the show is set (link to context). |
| **Representation of age** |
| Linking to expectations of geek/nerd culture being associated with behaving in a young & immature way, Roy and moss very much act like children/teenagers- not as adults. Think about:* Moss’ childlike excitement at being accepted on to Countdown
* Roy’s inability to deal with awkward social interactions such as with the window cleaner
* Roy’s obsession to not be labelled as a window cleaner and to look impressive to his old friend
* The non-alcoholic drinks in the 8+ club (& the reaction when Roy asks for a beer)
 |

|  |
| --- |
| **Context**  |
| * Countdown has been on Tv since 1982 and is iconic- the audience will recognise the set, format, hosts etc
* The idea of fitting in is very important to each of the characters. Nerd culture is still considered ‘different’ ad not mainstream, and there are still a lot of negative stereotypes about nerds in society- though some nerd culture is becoming more mainstream (Game of Thrones etc)
* The creator, Graham Linehan, has written 2 successful sitcoms for Channel 4 before (Black Books & Father Ted)- Similar style- offbeat, weird comedy.
* The stars were all relatively new to acting, though Ayoade (Moss) had done some previous alternative comedy
* Channel 4 has a good reputation for commissioning and broadcasting popular and innovative sitcoms- Black Books, Father Ted, Peep Show, Green Wing, Skins
* Set in London- Lots of offices, diverse workforce, lots of cultural experiences, where Countdown is filmed.
 |