

Black Representation on British Television Scheme of Work

Media in Context: Representation and Reception Theory in action

Overview

This scheme of work (SOW) is designed for use with Media Studies at Key Stage Five (KS5). The SOW has been designed to complement the BFI's Black Star Season. Titles are available to view for free at BFI Mediatheques as well as online if desired. However, the SOW has been designed so that the lessons can still be used without clips.

The SOW has also been designed with the new KS5 Media Studies specification in mind. It is for this reason that the SOW focuses on a study of the historical progression of black representation on television in order to meet the new requirements that students have an understanding of the historical context of the media. The lessons would also work with the current media specification, though it may be wise to condense them to focus on the key elements.

Curriculum links

Media Studies (2016 Spec):

- Demonstrate appreciation and critical understanding of the media and their role both historically and currently in society, culture politics and the economy.
- Engage in critical debate about academic theories used in media studies.
- Study at least one media product targeting or produced by a minority group.
- Study the way events, issues, individuals and social groups are represented through processes of selection and combination
- Study the way the media through re-presentation constructs versions of reality.
- Study the social and cultural context of media.
- Understand how and why particular social groups may be under represented or misrepresented.

Media Studies (old spec):



- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of media concepts, contexts and critical debates.
- Apply knowledge and understanding when analysing media products and processes to show how meanings and responses are created.
- Study the mainstream media's role and influence in the construction of identities.
- Study audiences and identities, including audience uses and responses, self-representation, role-playing, collective identities.
- Study debates about dominant and marginalised identities.
- Study ideologies, and the ideas and values communicated by identities.

SOW Objectives

1. To understand how black communities have been historically represented on television.
2. To apply this understanding in order to engage in productive debate.
3. To critically analyse key media texts.
4. To evaluate the social and political impact of representation of key groups within the media.

Structure

This SOW has been designed as a series of five lessons, each focusing on a different period in the history of British television, from 1960s-present. Each lesson focuses on a particular critical debate and the accompanying theory, and concludes with students creating a case study about a particular feature of that decade. This means that at the conclusion of the SOW, students will have a series of detailed case studies that cover some of the key moments in television history.

Each lesson contains a ‘final thoughts’ statement. These statements are deliberately controversial and are designed to excite discussion and debate. In lesson five, the SOW concludes with students creating and delivering presentations to show their understanding of how the historical media landscape has contributed to the contemporary media landscape.

The lessons rely heavily on students contributing orally to debates, presentations and class discussions. There is only one exercise that focuses explicitly on writing a response, however any of the debate exercises can be adjusted to include a writing element.

The overall structure of the SOW is as follows

Lesson One: The 1960s

- Reception Theory: Encoding and Decoding, (misinterpretation and audience autonomy)
- Ideologies
- Case study: *Fable* (BBC, 1965)

Lesson Two: The 1970s

- Constructions of reality/ realities
- Media ideologies
- Integration vs. assimilation
- Case study: The sitcom and black representation

Lesson Three: The 1980s

- Historical context; the creation of Channel 4
- The problem of character in TV drama
- Visibility vs. pigeon-holing
- Case study: *Big George is Dead* (Channel 4, 1987)

Lesson Four: The 1990s

- Comedy as community resistance vs. comedy as racial attack



- Case study: *Desmond's* (Channel 4, 1987-94)

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Lesson Five: 2000s-Present

- Current issues and debates in the media
- Progression vs. stasis
- Case study: Modern black TV actors
- Culmination: Presentation

Additional Resources

Below is a list of additional resources that may be useful when teaching this SOW.

Attend

BFI Presents: Black Star (17th October- 31st December: Events Nationwide). The UK's biggest ever season of film and television dedicated to celebrating the range, versatility and power of black actors. Black Star explores the relationship between stars and the audiences who love them, spotlighting great performances by black actors on screen.

Black Star will be available to audiences everywhere in the UK; in cinemas including BFI Southbank, on BBC Television, on DVD/Blu-ray and online via BFI Player from 17 October – 31 December, with further projects planned to celebrate the contribution of black practitioners working across film and TV in the coming years.

Many of the lessons in this SOW compliment the screenings and events that will take place during this season.

Watch

- *Ten Bob in Winter* (1966) BFI Player
- *Pressure* (1975) BFI Player
- BFI Mediatheque: explore over 80 film and TV titles in the Black Britain collection

Read

- BFI Screenonline:
 - Black Pioneers
 - Black British Film
 - Many individual pages about the TV shows and films considered as part of this SOW
- Therese Daniels and Jane Gerson, *The Colour Black: Black Images in British Television* (London: BFI Publishing, 1989)
- Sarita Malik, *Representing Black Britain: Black and Asian Images on Television*, (London: SAGE Publications, 2001)
- Channel 4 annual report:
http://www.channel4.com/media/documents/corporate/annual-reports/C4_Creative_Greenhouse_2015.pdf