

Worksheet 1.6

News as genre

The following table is designed to draw your attention to some of the key conventions (ingredients) that crop up in most news broadcasts. Write up the detail of your observations from watching an entire Channel 4 News broadcast. Having described the observation in column 2, consider the likely effect of that element of the show. You may react to some of the conventions in a different way from others, but that doesn't matter – the key thing is to keep asking yourself why each of these ingredients is there? Have they become part of the familiar fabric of news programmes?

The following list of 'impact' words may help your analysis. Try to use as many of them as you can.

Alive	Interactive
Authoritative	Interpretive
Balanced	Moderate
Branded	Observant
Clear	Persuasive
Compassionate	Raw
Credible	Reassuring
Critical	Restrained
Dramatic	Slick
Educational	Spontaneous
Enticing	Transparent
Entertaining	Unbiased
Fair	Unsentimental
Formal	Urgent
Fun	Visually interesting
Informal	

Ingredient/Convention	Description derived from viewing Channel 4 News	Impact
Opening display of news stories coming up.		Why?
Opening credits. The theme tune.	Describe the credits.	Connotations? What is the tune's impact on you? Is it the only time that music occurs during the programme that is not an actual part of the news stories being told? Why might that be?
A studio.	Describe the studio – colours, atmosphere, evidence of the work going on behind the scenes or not, etc. Keep a note of how the look of the show's studio is echoed at other points in the programme – in captions, graphics, etc.	Connotations? What is the impact of this consistent and repeated 'look'?

	<p>What equipment is on display?</p> <p>How are the presenters located in it?</p> <p>Does the studio reveal any of the mechanics of the show's production – cameras, lighting rigs, etc?</p>	
Branding.	Where does the Channel 4 logo appear?	<p>Do you feel the branding is intrusive or subtle?</p> <p>Does the branding help the sense of the programme as a unified whole?</p>
The main presenter.	<p>Describe their appearance, dress and demeanour and race. What is the presenter's body language?</p> <p>Since Kirsty Young was first allowed to lean on furniture in the Channel Five bulletins presenters have become more informal. Is that reflected in the first appearance of the presenter in the show you observe?</p>	Discuss in what ways the presenter's authority as the main interpreter and guide to the news is enhanced by these elements.
<p>Introductory summaries.</p> <p>Subsequent appearances.</p>	<p>Try to capture the introductory summary the presenter provides for the first story of the evening. How is it written and performed?</p> <p>Direct to camera?</p> <p>Tense - present, past or future?</p> <p>Diction – fluent and articulate?</p> <p>Dramatic?</p> <p>Received pronunciation or a noticeable accent?</p> <p>How is the presenter shown when sitting?</p> <p>What is surrounding him/her?</p> <p>Is (s)he ever filmed from behind?</p> <p>Is (s)he allowed to look at the camera?</p> <p>Is (s)he filmed from different angles?</p>	What is the purpose of this second introduction to the news bulletin's contents with key images?
Studio graphics.	What images are selected to go behind the presenter to illustrate	What is their purpose?

	<p>each story?</p> <p>What graphics are used during the course of the broadcast?</p>	<p>What is their impact?</p>
<p>The first news package.</p>	<p>How is the first news story 'package' introduced?</p> <p>What form of words does the presenter use to introduce the reporter in the field?</p>	<p>Purpose?</p> <p>Impact?</p>
<p>The reporter – does (s)he appear?</p>	<p>Where is the reporter located? Does it convey a sense of the authenticity of his report?</p> <p>Does the location supply visual clues about the story or a backdrop to which the reporter can refer?</p> <p>Is the reporter a passive witness to events?</p> <p>Is the reporter where the action is happening? Are they at any risk?</p> <p>How is the hand off back to the studio done?</p>	<p>Purpose?</p> <p>Impact?</p>
<p>Studio interviews (pre-recorded?)</p>	<p>Can be very static – how are they kept interesting? Look for changes in camera angles.</p> <p>Changes in camera angle may inject vitality but also may be a sign of fluffed lines and pre-recorded elements of the interview, if it is pre-recorded.</p>	<p>Purpose?</p> <p>Impact?</p>
<p>The sign off before a break.</p>	<p>How does the fact of a break in the broadcast for advertisements provide an opportunity to sell the contents of the second half of the show?</p> <p>What is offered as an enticement to keep the viewer viewing?</p>	<p>Purpose?</p> <p>Impact?</p>
<p>The return after the break. Is there a recapitulation of the main headlines?</p>	<p>Which stories?</p>	<p>Why?</p>
<p>As the broadcast heads towards its finish do various softer or lesser stories get introduced?</p>	<p>Describe.</p>	<p>Explain why these elements might be in the show?</p> <p>Why have a second presenter</p>

<p>Does a secondary host take over?</p> <p>How is the handover done? Is it formal or friendly?</p> <p>Is the second string presenter male or female?</p>		<p>for the 'lesser' stories?</p>
<p>The final stories in many news programmes tend to be softer. Is that the case in the broadcast you are watching? The story might be about something quirky or it may have a show business angle or it might provide a more light-hearted take on one of the bulletin's earlier stories.</p>		<p>Impact?</p>
<p>The sign off – what promises/enticements are offered about the next day's show?</p>		<p>Purpose?</p> <p>Impact?</p>
<p>As the show ends how do the presenters interact? Do they seem to relax? How are they filmed – from the front or from above?</p> <p>Do they appear to be remaining on duty, awaiting our next visit?</p>		<p>Purpose?</p> <p>Impact?</p>
<p>Final captions/credits.</p> <p>Presence of the logo again?</p>		<p>Purpose?</p> <p>Impact?</p>
<p>Sponsorship leading into the weather.</p>	<p>Does the sponsorship package introduce a very different tone or continue the sense of the news bulletin's seriousness and authority?</p>	<p>Purpose?</p> <p>Impact?</p>
<p>The weather.</p>		<p>What is the impact of ending with the weather?</p>

