

# Thinking about genre

Genre means a 'kind' or 'type' and is a way of categorising films and TV programmes. Before you start studying TV drama, a broad television genre, you need to think about the role genre plays in broadcasters' and television producers' thinking as well as in audiences' viewing. This will help put into context your detailed work on the TV drama genre.

Your television viewing

- What are some of your favourite TV programmes?
- Why do you like them?
- Are you aware that you are looking at a programme in a particular genre?

Look at extracts from at least three contrasting television genres. You might try watching one without sound and one with sound only.

- Can you identify the genre you are watching/ listening to?
- What features enable you to identify the genre?

Look at examples of programmes and TV dramas which combine elements of different genres – called hybrids. Examples include *Big Brother*, *The Sopranos*, *Extras*, *Doctor Who*, *Sea of Souls*.

- Which elements of different genres can you identify in each programme?
- Why do you think programmes like these are produced?
- How would you label programmes like these?
- How do broadcasters label them?



What makes HBO's *The Sopranos* a hybrid, and why?

## Thinking about genre

- Do you think that broadcasters and producers consider the different programmes they produce in terms of genre?
- How far are the generic features of a programme part of audiences' viewing experience? In what ways?
- In what ways do you think a programme's genre affects the kind of programme which is produced?

Audiences' ability to recognise the genre of a programme almost instantly means that they have assimilated the ingredients ('conventions' – see **Worksheet 2**) of a genre without realising it. As you study TV drama, you should think about how far the genre affects the nature of the drama.