

SERIES

TEACHING FILM AND MEDIA STUDIES

Teaching TV Sitcom

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Education



Series Editor: Vivienne Clark

The conventions of sitcom

Form

- Episodes tend to be between 24 and 30 minutes long, with self-contained narratives.
- Sitcoms tend to be contained within series not serials.
- Sitcoms are heavily reliant upon a formula of repetition in a static situation with changing events. However within the formula, innovation is necessary to engage the audience and to gratify their expectations.

Style

- They are usually studio-based.
- The setting is usually a familiar location, often an interior.
- They are usually based in domestic or workplace environments.
- They use a limited number of locations.
- They have a conventional *mise en scène*.

Narrative

- The narrative of a sitcom rarely continues from one episode to the next. Even in sitcoms that have ongoing storylines, each episode still tends to commence with a situation that has to be resolved by the end.
- Sitcoms are based on a situation usually connected with working or family life.
- Sitcom narratives follow a circular structure of a starting equilibrium, followed by disequilibrium and a return to equilibrium at the end of the episode.

Courtesy of bfi Skills



- Friends