



BLACK STAR EDUCATION

Media in Context:
Representation and
Reception Theory in action.

Black Representation on British Television: The 1970s

The Sitcom and Black Representation

Historical Context: Vertical Relay

The 1970s-1980s are thought of as the 'golden era' of British Situational Comedy

In teams, you have three minutes to research and write down as many British sitcoms from the 1970s as you can. Only one person from the team may hold the pen and each person must write something down before you move onto the next person.

Ready...

Three...Two... One...

GO!

Representation vs. Re-presentation

Now highlight all the sitcoms which have black actors.

What does this suggest about the role of black communities in the media at this time?

Speed Date Debate

- To what extent are these sitcoms **reflecting** reality?
- To what extent are these sitcoms **informing** reality?

You will either be arguing that sitcoms are informed by and reflect reality or that they actually influence and inform our understanding of reality.

Speed Date Debate

Place your chairs in a line facing one another. Everyone who is arguing that they **reflect** reality sit on one side. Everyone who is arguing that they **inform** reality sit on the other.

You will have only three minutes with your partner to make your argument before you move on to the next person.

Use examples (from any period) to back up what you're saying.

Speed Date Debate: The key arguments

REFLECT

INFORM

Theory: Representation

Richard Dyer:

“How we are seen determines in part how we are treated; how we treat others is based on how we see them; such seeing comes from representation.”

Making links

- Do you agree with this statement?

Using some of the ideas you have just generated as a starting point, write a short paragraph outlining your thoughts on this statement.

Theory: Media Ideologies

An ideology is a common idea or belief shared by a specific community which informs their understanding of the world around them.

Choose one of these ideologies and explain what it is. Can you think of any examples from the media where we might see this ideology in practice?

Capitalism

Multiculturalism

Gender
roles

The American
Dream

Communism

Religion

Theory: Media Ideologies

Stuart Hall:

“Race is one of the most significant themes in situation comedies ... the appearance of blacks, alongside whites, in situation comedies, it is argued, will help to naturalize and normalize their presence in British society... But if you examine these fun occasions more closely, you will often find... that the comedies do not simply include blacks: they are about race.”

- What ideology/ideologies is Hall considering here?
- Do you agree?

Integration vs. Assimilation

What are the positive and negative connotations of these two words?

INTEGRATION

Positive:

Negative:

ASSIMILATION

Positive:

Negative:

Case Study: Race and the 1970s Sitcom

- Use the following resources to make detailed notes on race and sitcoms of the 1970s.
- Use the table provided to help structure your notes.

<http://www.screenonline.org.uk/people/id/544274/index.html>

<http://www.screenonline.org.uk/tv/id/1108234/index.html>

<http://www.screenonline.org.uk/tv/id/490822/index.html>

<http://www.screenonline.org.uk/tv/id/465503/index.html>

Final Thoughts

The sitcom is the perfect vehicle to demonstrate subversive views and opinions. Its 'approachability' allows producers to make sensitive issues more palatable for their audiences.

- How far do you agree with this statement?