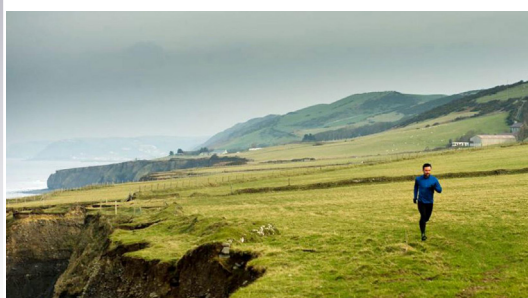# Media Language

You will need to consider:

- the different elements of media language, including technical, visual and audio codes

- moving image media language such as camerawork (distance, angle, movement), mise-en-scène (settings, locations, costume, props), editing (continuity editing) and sound (diegetic, non-diegetic and post-production sound)

- how the different elements of media language and the combination of elements, influence meaning and communicate multiple meanings

- genre codes, conventions and iconography

- principles of repetition and variation of a repertoire of elements

- hybridity and intertextuality

- the significance of challenging and/or subverting genre conventions.

- how genres reflect their social and historical contexts

- the dynamic nature of genre

- the significance of genre to the television industry and television audiences

- narrative construction, structures, techniques and conventions

- how media language incorporates viewpoints and ideologies.

Critical perspectives

- Semiotics – Roland Barthes

- Narratology – Tzvetan Todorov

- Genre theory – Steve Neale

- Structuralism – Claude Levi-Strauss

- Postmodernism – Jean Baudrillard

https://mrspeabodyinvestigates.files.wordpress.com/2015/12/season-2-episode-1-clip.jpg?w=484&h=272

http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/tv/reviews/hinterland-bbc4-tv-review-a-welcome-piece-of-welsh-noir-thats-set-to-make-a-killing-9298912.html

"Hinterland"

Hinterland:

Title: Refers to the outlying areas away from the coast or main towns and cities, or the areas surrounding them, but also has connotations of the unknown – an area which is perhaps hidden, less visible.

The landscape becomes a metaphor for the secrets it keeps.

Analytical toolkit for television

You will need to analyse television texts in terms of media language.

This will include:

- technical codes
- visual codes
- genre
- narrative

Mindshower – what would you expect to include for each of these headings?

Then use the digital resource **'Analytical toolkit'** to compare your answers with those suggested.

Technical codes recap quiz

Use the digital resource – '**Technical codes Blockbusters**'

WT PF MES HAS WAS F LAS CU SB ND CF ES SRS OSS LS BEV MS TS DF D

What types of crime drama can you identify?

- This task will help you to think about genre and sub-genre.

- Use the montage below of different crime dramas as stimulus material OR use TV listings magazines.

- Use the task sheet on page 5 and identify the crime dramas in a week's viewing and group them according to sub-genre. Add other examples.

- Then, using the task sheet on page 6 move on to hybridity. Identify any hybrid crime dramas with examples.

Crime drama
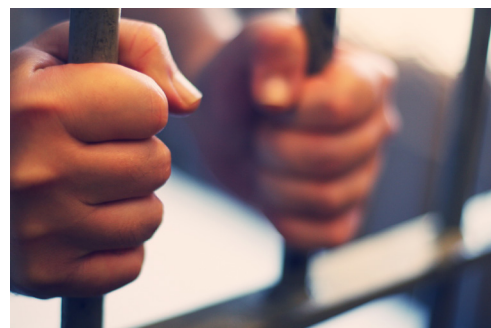
Crime sub-themes and sub-genres

Name of Crime Programme	Sub-genre

Hybridity

Crime Programme	Hybrid of…

Crime sub-genres –

To what sub-genre do the following programmes belong?

CRIME

- 'Morse', 'Midsomer Murders', 'Luther'
- 'Peaky Blinders', 'The Sopranos'
- 'CSI', 'Silent Witness'
- 'Silk', 'Judge John Deed'
- 'Cracker', 'The Mentalist', 'Criminal Minds'
- 'Orange is the New Black', 'Prison Break', 'Mad Dogs'
- 'Agatha Christie's Marple', 'Grantchester'
- 'Poirot', 'Sherlock'
- 'Broadchurch', 'Happy Valley', No 'True Detective' 'Maigret','Death in Paradise'
- 'The Killing', 'The Bridge', 'Wallander'
- 'Spooks'
- Pulp Fiction
- 'Walking the Dead'
- 'Dexter', 'Arrow'

Crime drama hybridity –

What genre is combined with crime in...?

CRIME with....

- 'Nancy Drew', 'Veronica Mars'
- 'Grantchester', 'Ripper Street', 'Endeavour', 'Foyle's War'
- 'The Bill'
- 'Gotham', 'Daredevil'
- 'The Thin Blue Line'
- 'The X-Files', 'Almost Human', 'Arrow'

Genre – What are the codes and conventions of a crime drama?

- Think RESISTS

- Recurring situations

- Elements of narrative

- Style

- Iconography

- Settings

- Themes

- Stock characters

A crime genre text is one which has crime (including the preparation for, or aftermath of) as its central construct

5 Signifiers of the crime genres – RESISTS

Find 5 things for each of the RESISTS codes/conventions that audiences would expect to find in a crime drama. Check your answers against the list in the interactive resource 'Resists'.

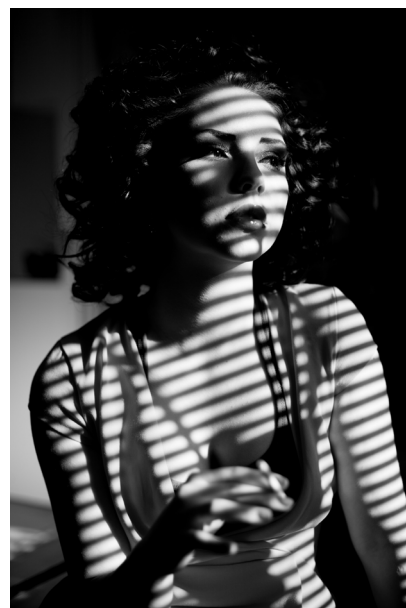|	
Recurring situations	
Elements of narrative	
Style	
Iconography	
Settings	
Themes	
Stock characters	

Film noir task: What are the generic signifiers of film noir?
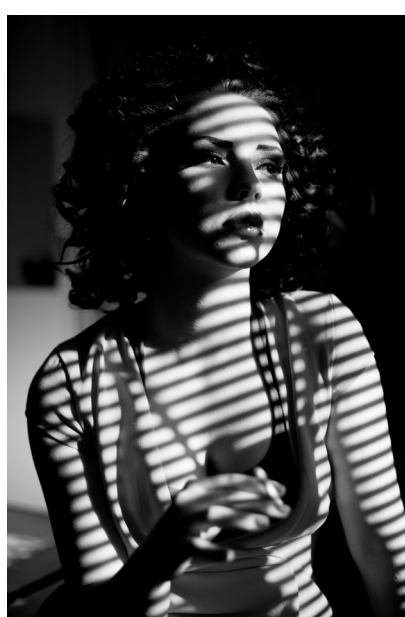
The "Rules" of Film Noir

- **R**ecurring situations

- **E**lements of narrative

- **S**tock characters

- **I**conography

- **S**etting

- **T**hemes

- **S**tyle

Film noir – task: Watch the clips and identify its key generic signifiers. Use "RESISTS" to help you

Use the interactive resource '**Film Noir**' to compare your answers with those suggested.

The Rules of Film Noir (2009)

Sebastian Merde (57 mins)

Defining Film Noir | Film Dissection [#45]

Jack's Movie Reviews (under 9 mins)

Genre Recipe task:

In groups, write your own genre 'recipe' using the format below

Film Noir

Main Ingredients

- 1 hard-boiled private eye

- 1 femme fatale

- 2 disposable sidekicks

- Mean Streets

- etc.

Method

Take a P.I with a past and bake in a dusty office setting in the big city. Allow light to pour through venetian blinds, adding a desk, chair, phone and Bourbon as required. Fold in a mysterious blonde in a sexy suit and steam, allowing sob story to develop.

Add trench coat, trilby and revolver and heat under neon lights in a rain-swept alley. Whisk in a couple of murders, a nightclub assignation and simmer. Leave plot to thicken.*

Mix in a sleazy, jazz soundtrack and a handful of heavies. Beat until truth appears. Sprinkle with clueless policemen for grilling.

Add a final twist of plot and betrayal by femme fatale. Leave her to stew behind bars for 20 years.

Garnish with shadows & cynical one-liners and serve, like revenge, cold.

*If plot thickens incomprehensibly, ignore. Who cares who killed the chauffeur after all?

Genre task – 'Hinterland' and Nordic noir

Watch the trailer from BBC Store – Nordic Noir Collection

Watch the "Time Shift" documentary "The Story of Scandinavian Crime Drama"

What conventions of the crime show, particularly the 'Nordic noir' are evident in the featured texts ?

Use the '**Hinterland and Nordic noir**' digital resource.

Nordic noir

Stock characters

Iconography

Themes

Settings

Style

Nordic Noir

Elements of narrative

Recurring situations

Task: Watch "Hinterland" Episode 1: 'Devil's Bridge' and identify the generic signifiers in the text

- Identify the genre codes, conventions and iconography of the crime drama (use **RESISTS**)

- What other genres/generic features are evident, particularly those of 'Nordic noir'? What makes it "different"?

What generic elements of crime/Nordic noir are evident in "Hinterland"?

Recurring situations	
Elements of narrative	
Style	
Iconography	
Settings	
Themes	
Stock Characters	

Task: Hybridity & Intertextuality

'Hinterland' contains intertextual elements with which audiences may be familiar. These include:

- elements of Nordic noir – style, mood, themes, landscape

- elements of Welsh language programming

- cultural codes – references to other texts which audiences may pick up

Identify the intertextual elements within the text. Consider e.g. the hotel room and corridors, the two little girls, the children's home – do these remind us of any other texts? Look at these elements and consider how they work in terms of media language (creating meaning), genre and audiences.

Genre Task – repetition and difference (Steve Neale)

Use the comment below as a starting point. In pairs, identify what is "old" in terms of genre and what is "new", "unique" or "ground-breaking". Why has the genre changed/developed?

http://www.bbc.co.uk/mediacentre/latestnews/2014/hinterland-figures.html

"groundbreaking series, and the audience figures confirm the appeal of its unique mix of high quality drama, stunning landscapes and bilingual dialogue."

Adrian Davies, Head of English Language Programmes and Services, BBC Cymru Wales.

Use the digital resource **Repetition and Difference** to compare your ideas with those suggested.

Task: Narrative – Tzvetan Todorov

Can you identify the various stages of the narrative in Episode 1 of Hinterland?

- EQUILIBRIUM: The given state or balance of affairs before the......

- DISRUPTION: Disruption of the equilibrium (may stem from a catalyst)

- RECOGNITION: That there has been a disruption

- RESOLUTION: The attempts to restore the equilibrium

- EQUILIBRIUM: Restoration of a similar or changed state of affairs after the disruption has been resolved

Are all these stages completely realised in Episode 1? Why?

There should be cause/effect links throughout the narrative. Can you identify these?

Would we expect full closure in an episodic drama? Cliffhangers?

Is there causality? Can you identify cause/effect links?

Binary opposites (Levi–Strauss)

Is the narrative driven by binary oppositions (Lévi–Strauss)?

Give examples

Binary Opposition (defined by Lévi-Strauss) – many oppositions are set up to drive the narrative and we watch to discover which side "triumphs" in the end. Can you identify what is in "opposition" to the first word ?

- Past v ……

- Illusion v ……

- Corruption v ……

- London v ……

- Secrecy v ……

- Urban v ……

- God v ……

- Entrapment v ……

- Superstition v ……

- Home v ……

- New ways v ……

- Vengeance v ……
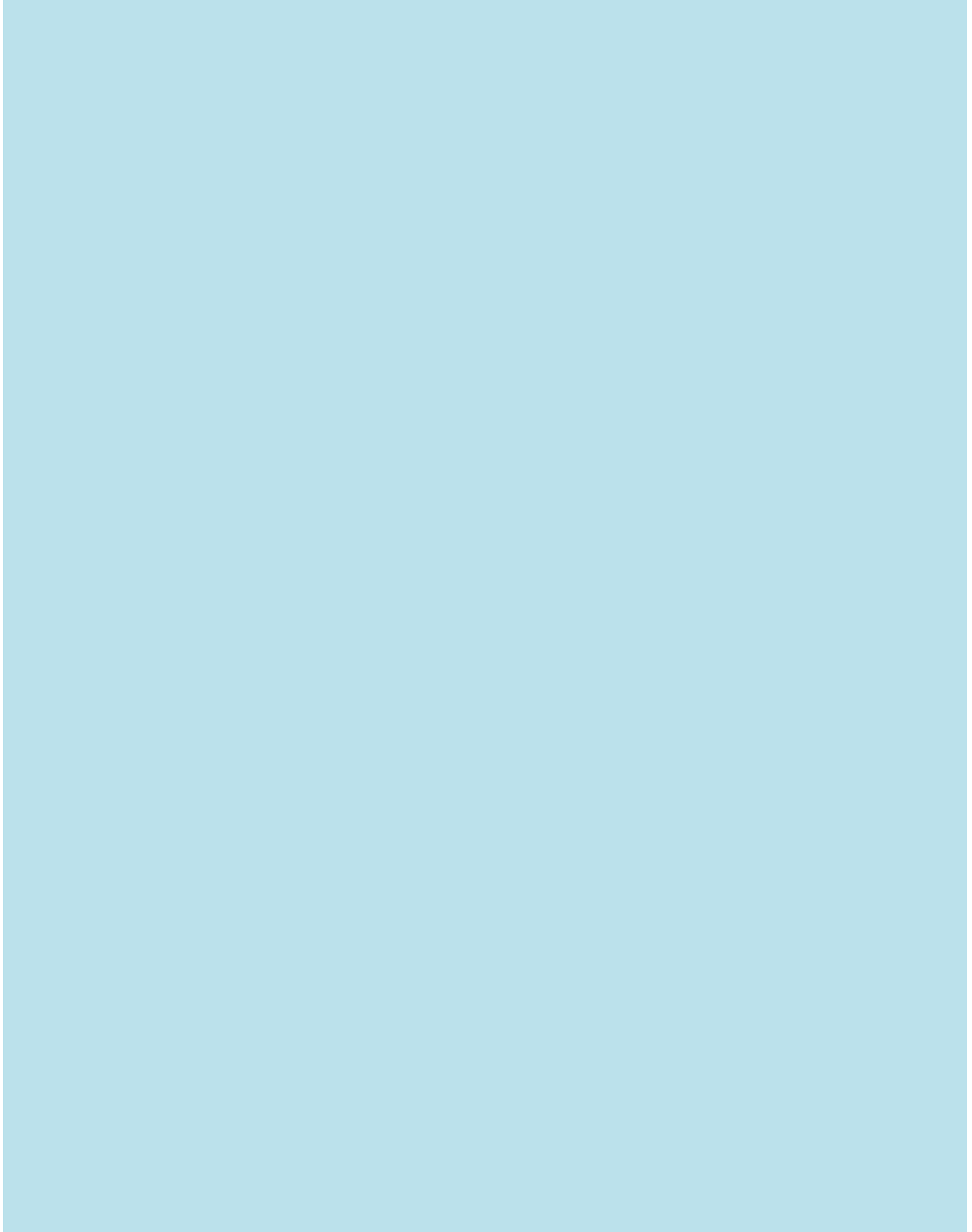
- Order v ……

- Mared v ……

Use the digital resource '**Binary opposites**' to check your answers

Story arcs/character arcs

There are several story arcs and narrative strands. Can you identify them?

Narrative – Hinterland

Key Questions for class discussion:

- Is the narrative entirely linear? Give examples

- Does the episode have a flexi-narrative?

- Are there story arcs which run across the series?

- Are there obvious codes (Barthes) around which the narrative is structured? Give examples

- Is it realist? Does it construct a hyper-reality? Post – modern?

- How are time and space manipulated within the narrative?

Baudrillard & Post–modernism

- Baudrillard argues that the media create hyper-realities based on a continuous process of mediation. What is encoded as 'real' (and what we decode through media products) is not 'real' but instead a 'simulacrum' which offers us a hyper-reality ("A real without origin or reality" – Jean Baudrillard) that we accept as real because we are so consistently exposed to it.

- Thus media images have come to seem more "real" than the reality they supposedly represent

- 'Our mental pictures of the perfect body, house, meal and sexual relationship have been created through exposure to constantly recycled media depictions that have no basis in fact – but it is these images that create our expectations' (Em Griffen (2012) A First Look at Communication Theory, p319)

- Lévi-Strauss suggested that media texts are now made up of "debris" that we recognise from other texts and these are combined – "bricolage". This may be heard in, for example, a musical "mash-up" or remix.

Post Modernism

Some features of a postmodern text: Can you identify any of these in Hinterland?

- Intertextuality – acknowledgement of existing media texts

- References to popular culture

- Bricolage

- Self-reflexive

- Parody/Pastiche ("pasted")/Homage

- Irony

- Ambiguity

- Narrative fragmentation or temporal distortion

- Anti-realist

Post–modern element	Example(s) from the text
Intertextuality – acknowledgement of existing media texts	
References to popular culture	
Bricolage	
Irony	
Anti-realist	
Narrative fragmentation or temporal distortion	
Self-reflexive	
Parody/Pastiche ("pasted")/Homage	
Ambiguity	

How far is 'Hinterland' a post-modern text?

- Relies on audience understanding of crime drama, specifically Nordic noir, to decode it. Give examples.

- The "Hinterland" world is a hyper-reality – it is rural/coastal Wales re-presented from a mediated perspective, linked to witchcraft, superstition and the supernatural. Consider how this is constructed.

- Is Mathias' professional world hyper-real? Based on our cultural perception of an institution (the police force) that is itself a constructed 'simulacrum' rather than experienced first hand. How do we know that the police force is like this? It is based primarily on the way it is re-presented to us through the media?

- It shares similarities of style with other "Celtic noir" – e.g. "Shetland"- and other contemporary crime dramas which have been influenced by Nordic noir – e.g. "Broadchurch"

- There are other intertextual references to popular culture – e.g. homage to "The Shining"

- It is ambiguous in terms of its plotlines and moral compass.

Extended writing task

Essay title:

How does "Hinterland" exemplify Steve Neale's concept that genres must have elements of both 'repetition' and 'difference'?

Give reasons for your answer and refer to detailed examples from the text.