



## 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, including: codes, conventions and iconography; principles of repetition and variation of a repertoire of elements; hybridity and intertextuality; the dynamic nature of genre
- narrative construction, structures, techniques and conventions
- how media language incorporates viewpoints and ideologies.
- how genre conventions are socially and historically relative, dynamic and can be used in a hybrid way
- the way media language incorporates viewpoints and ideologies



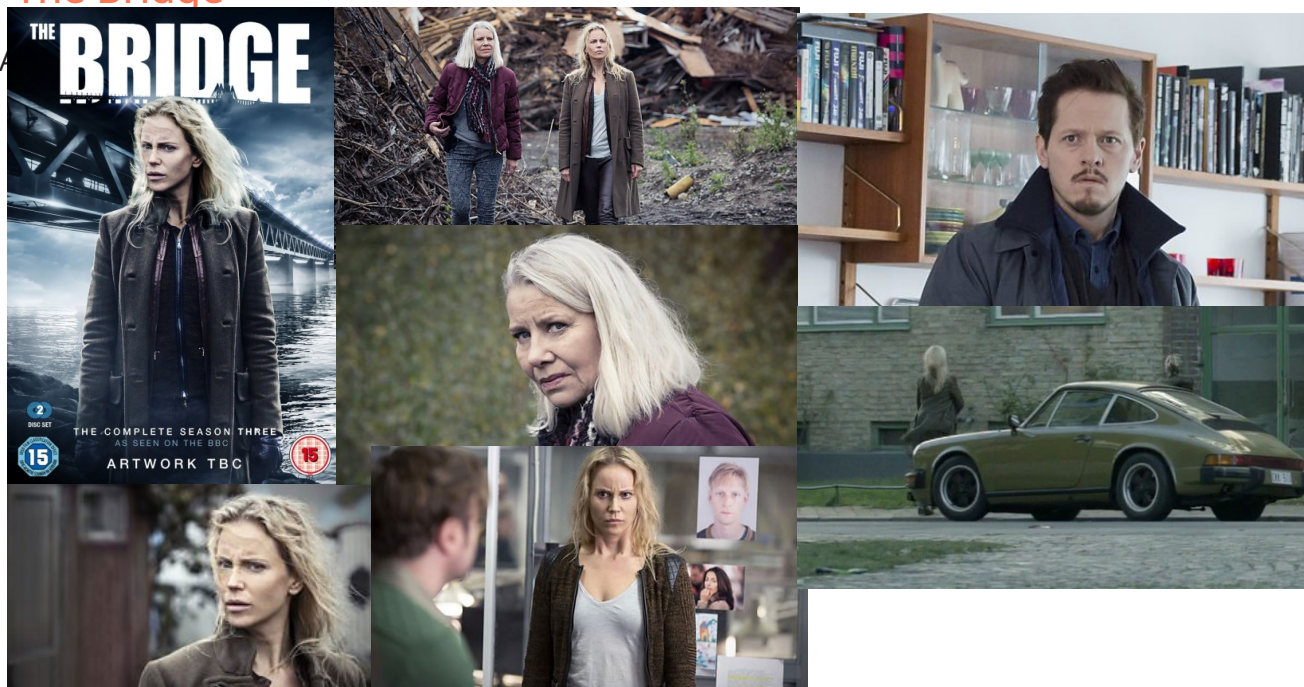
### Theoretical approaches

- Semiotics – Roland Barthes
- Narratology – Tzvetan Todorov
- Genre theory – Steve Neale
- Structuralism – Claude Levi-Strauss
- Post-modernism – Jean Baudrillard



<http://helenahalmel.blogspot.co.uk/2014/02/which-nordic-noir-character-would-you.html>

### “The Bridge”





### 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'





### 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.



Gun

BlakeDavidTaylor / Getty Images

### 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 drama hybridity –

What genre is combined with crime in...?





### 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 their 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?



Torch  
peepo / Getty Images



Female silhouette  
joegolby / Getty Images



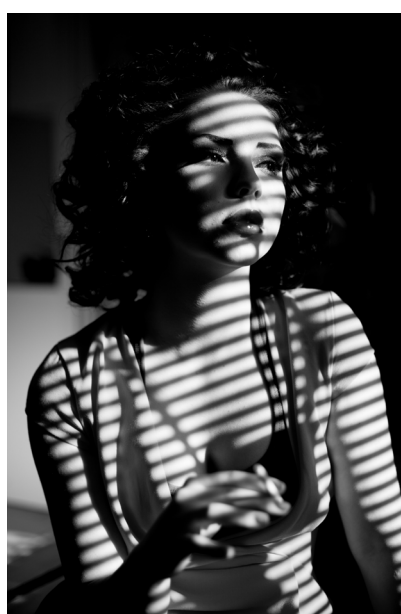
Armed detective  
Lux\_D / Getty Images



London in the fog  
simonbradfield / Getty Images



Noir female  
RetroAtelier / Getty Images

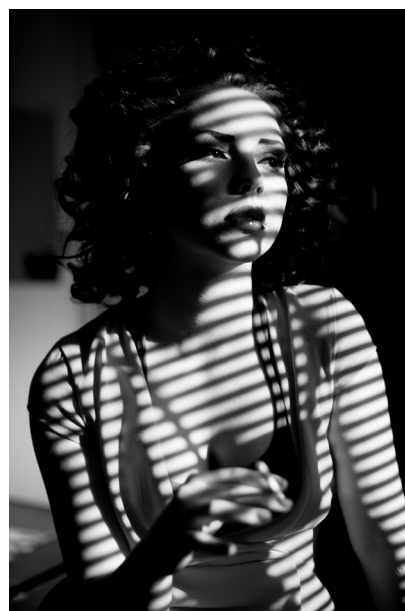


Woman in shadow of blinds  
freemixer / Getty Images



### The “Rules” of Film Noir

- Recurring situations
- Elements of narrative
- Stock characters
- Iconography
- Setting
- Themes
- Style



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 – ‘The Bridge’ and Nordic noir

Watch the trailer from BBC Store – Nordic Noir Collection

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o7XYXkSbl\\_w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o7XYXkSbl_w)

Watch the “Time Shift” documentary “The Story of Scandinavian Crime Drama”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RiwObVhyoc8>

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

Use the **‘Bridge and Nordic noir’** digital resource.



Police line  
ovjo12 / Getty Images



### Nordic noir

Stock characters

Iconography

Themes

Settings

Style



Nordic Noir

Elements of narrative

Recurring situations



### Task: Watch “The Bridge” Series 2: Seven minute overview and identify the generic signifiers in the text

Series 2 overview in seven minutes:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p038jlbb>

- 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 “The Bridge”?

Recurring situations	
Elements of narrative	
Style	
Iconography	
Settings	
Themes	
Stock Characters	



### Task: Hybridity & Intertextuality

'The Bridge' contains hybrid elements with which audiences may be familiar. These include:

- elements of film noir – style, mood, themes, landscape
- elements of crime drama and police procedural



Identify the intertextual elements within the text. Consider e.g. the style, especially the lighting. 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)

Watch Series 1: Episode 1 and make notes on its genre.

Use the article as a starting point. In pairs, identify what is “old” in terms of genre and what is “special” and gives it a “unique appeal”. Why has the genre changed/developed?

'One show in particular represents everything we've come to love about Scandinavian television. Bron/Broen (The Bridge), a co-production between Sweden's Sveriges Television and Denmark's DR, along with the German network ZDF, has given us two superb series and a third that surely ranks amongst the best television ever made. It first aired here in 2012, and quickly acquired a devoted following, just as it had back home. Two adaptations have since appeared: a Franco-British series, The Tunnel, just about to start its second series, and a recently cancelled version of The Bridge set on the US/Mexican border. Interesting though both these twists on the premise are, neither has quite captured the special atmosphere of the Scandinavian original.'

[www.denofgeek.com/tv/the-bridge/39851/the-bridge-an-unforgettable-scandinavian-drama](http://www.denofgeek.com/tv/the-bridge/39851/the-bridge-an-unforgettable-scandinavian-drama)

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





### The Bridge

A woman is found murdered in the middle of Oresund Bridge, exactly on the border between Sweden and Denmark. Saga Noren from Malmo CID and Martin Rohde from the Copenhagen police department are called to the scene. What at first looks like one murder turns out to be two. The bodies have been brutally cut off at the waist and joined together - the torso of a high-profile Swedish politician and the lower body of a Danish prostitute. The Swedish and Danish police need to cooperate in a race against the clock, desperately searching for a murderer determined to go beyond all moral limits to get his message across.

Task: Narrative – Tzvetan Todorov



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

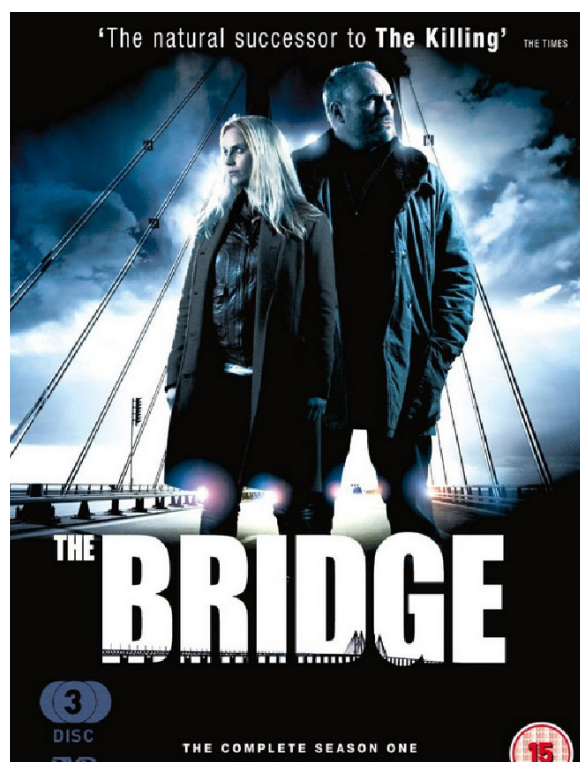
- EQUILIBRIUM: The given state or balance of affairs before the.....
- DISRUPTION: Disruption of the equilibrium (may stem from a catalyst)
- RECOGNITION: That there has been a disruption
- RESOLUTION: The attempts to restore the equilibrium
- EQUILIBRIUM: Restoration of a similar or changed state of 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 ?

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

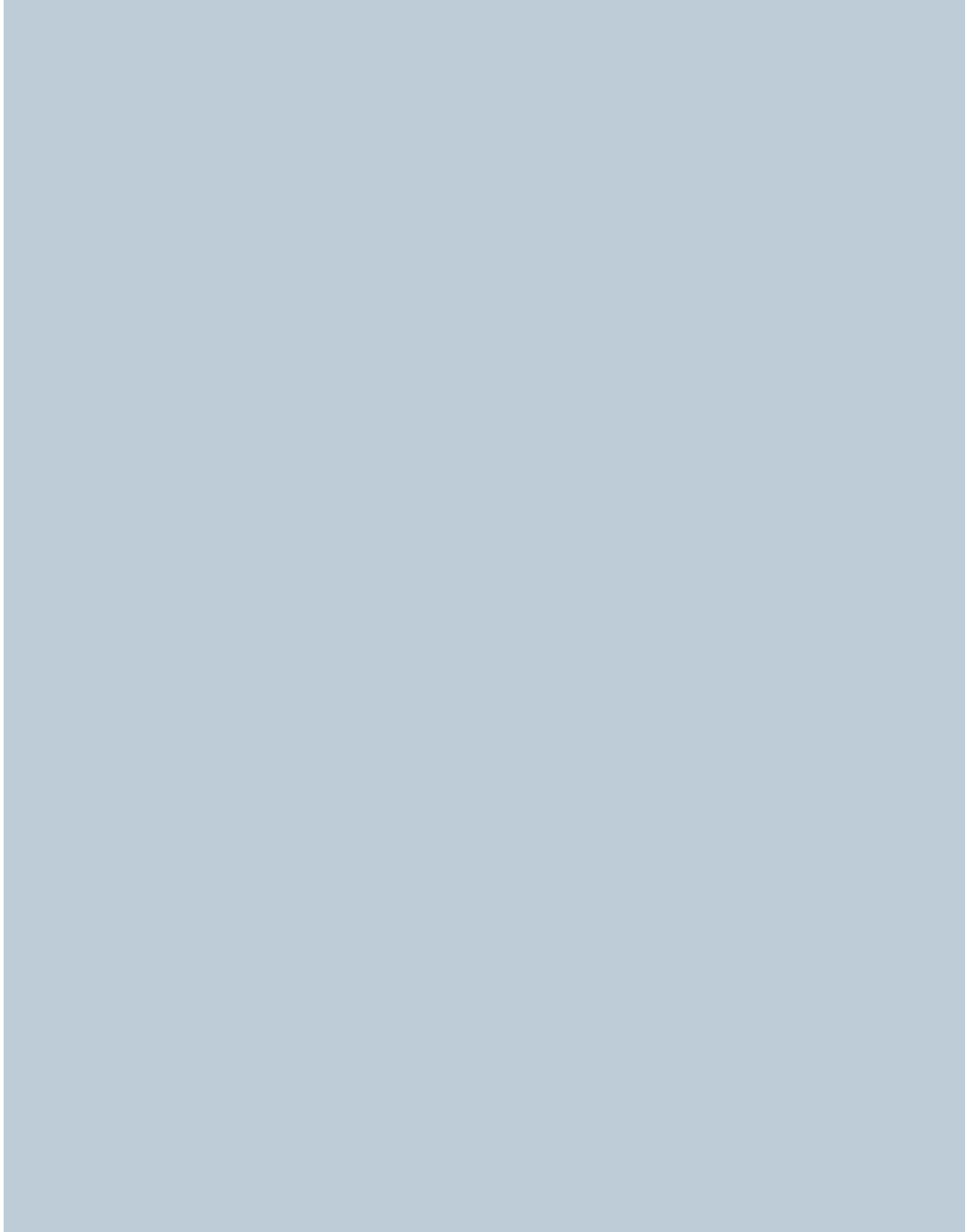
- Sweden v .....
- Saga v .....
- Past v .....
- Illusion v .....
- Light v .....
- Tact v .....
- Secrecy v .....
- Anxiety v .....
- Urban v .....
- Nuclear family v .....
- Power v .....
- Duty v .....
- Domestic v .....
- Family v .....
- Social awareness v .....
- Procedure v .....

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 – The Bridge

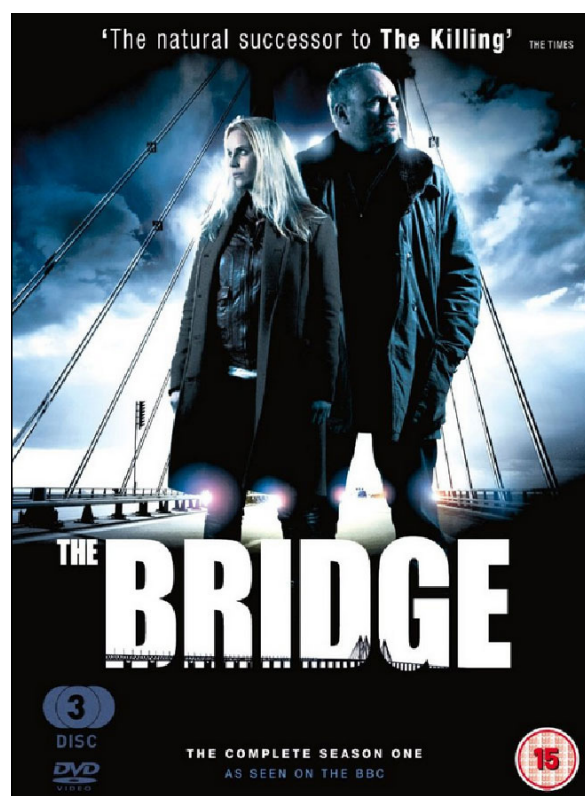
Key Questions for Class Discussion:

- 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 hyperrealities 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 hyperreality ("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 “The Bridge”?

- 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 'The Bridge' a post-modern text?

- Relies on audience understanding of crime drama, specifically Nordic noir, to decode it. Give examples.
- The diegetic "world" of "The Bridge" is a hyper-reality – it is Sweden/Denmark re-presented from a mediated perspective, linked to stereotypical national traits and cultural values. Consider how this is constructed.
- Is Saga's professional world hyperreal? 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 "Nordic noir" – e.g. "The Killing", "Wallander" – and other contemporary crime dramas which have been influenced by Nordic noir – e.g. "Broadchurch"
- There are other intertextual references – e.g. stylistically it is heavily influenced by film noir, its female focus and mood reflect the bleakness of dramatists such as Ibsen and Strindberg, its framing and mise-en-scene are Bergmanesque.
- It is ambiguous in terms of its plotlines and moral compass
- The creation of Saga as our heroine is ironic and self-reflexive – is she a female "Sherlock" – a 'high-functioning sociopath'?
- Martin directly references Lars Noren (Swedish playwright, same name as Saga) and Bergman when Saga gives little away about her life/ background.
- The narrative subverts expectations, creating enigma e.g. the heart operation is cancelled, the bomb doesn't explode







### Extended writing task

Essay title:

How does “The Bridge” 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.