Sound & Music
- Opening music: Consider the connotations of this music. The music is like a computer game and this links to the title and jobs that the characters have.
- Studio audience: The IT Crowd is filmed in front of a live studio audience and there are regular instances where we can hear the laughter. This is known as ‘canned laughter’.
- Other uses of sound: The Countdown clock at the start and then again after the battle outside along with the sound strings (snippets from the opening music) are used to signify the passing of time. The music at the 8+ event is rap music, suggesting style and coolness - juxtaposing how we see contenders of Countdown and geeks.
- Diegetic: The episode is primarily full of diegetic music, with just a few examples of non-diegetic samples from the opening sequence and the key scenes below.

Cinematography & Framing
Each of the 3 main framers has a miniature arc running through the episode and we see the different challenges each of them face. It is quite typical of sitcoms to have their characters come up against a problem and look to resolve them over the course of the episode. Consider how each character is framed and how each shot is composed when they are away from the IT office (the central location). Consider carefully the multiple locations that both Roy and Moss go to within this episode.

Editing
The episode has a rich range of techniques that help progress the narrative very quickly in this 23-minute episode. Montage, invisible, continuity are used regularly. This sitcom does not use the typical ‘fade’ or ‘dissolve’ to connote a flashback and instead relies on mise-en-scène elements (colour and costume).

Consider what the character’s costumes communicate to the audience.
- Prime looks like he is from ‘The Matrix’ (intertextuality), suggesting he is powerful and important.
- Roy is wearing a t-shirt with the phrase “I don’t work here” which could tell the audience about how he feels about his job.
- Moss is wearing brown checked shirt and a tie with thick rimmed glasses, often associated with nerds.
- Jen is wearing formals and professional clothing, suggesting that she is bossy, professional, in control and powerful.
- The inclusion of these characters, however, does show and accept the typical sitcom expectations about a complete silence.
- The asking for drinks in the club shows the innocent cul-
- Drinks: The asking for drinks in the club shows the innocent cul-
- Action films, however as the episode progresses that image changes as he is revealed as another Countdown champion.

Costumes - Props - Setting - Lighting - Facial expressions - Body language
Analyse the Mise en Scene from the episode. Below is a costume analysis:
- Roy is wearing brown glasses which suggests that he is a true geek.
- Moss is portrayed by Benedict Wong who is of Chinese descent.
- Moss is portrayed by Richard Ayoade who is mixed race and Prime’s character is played by Benedict Wong, who is of Chinese descent.
- In Prime’s first scene with Moss he appears inscrutable and potentially threatening, reinforcing some East Asian stereotypes familiar from action films, however as the episode progresses that image changes as he is revealed as another Countdown champion.
- The inclusion of these characters, however, does show and accept the multicultural nature of London where the programme is set.

The IT Crowd has a more diverse representation of different ethnicities in this episode but does not make explicit reference to them. Moss is portrayed by Richard Ayoade who is mixed race and Prime’s character is played by Benedict Wong, who is Chinese).

The character is played by Benedict Wong, who was keen to develop the character further.

The countdown shop is a regular visit. Moss and Roy are the main characters. Moss is a very confident character and Roy is a very insecure character. The two characters are often in conflict with each other.

The IT Crowd writer Graham Linehan is particularly known for using this character type for comedy purposes.

- The use of this character type is fluid throughout all seasons of the IT Crowd because of our 2 leads, but more exploit-
- The IT Crowd was highly recognized as is the format of the programme Countdown. The programme, which has been on Channel 4 since the 1980s has an easily recognizable format that the IT Crowd writers can use for comedy purposes.

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SITCOMS: GENRE, INTERTEXTUALITY & KEY TERMS

SITCOM GENRE CONVENTIONS

- 2-3 locations. Beliefs and learning about 'self'.
- Romance. Family (and how important a strong one is).
- Conflict/dilemma (that causes comedy).

CHARACTER ARCHETYPES

Character archetypes are similar types of character that appear within a genre. For example: Many horror films will have an innocent victim.
- The Fish Out of Water is a character who does not fit into the mainstream this can result in comedy if they misunderstand a situation. CHANDLER
- The Wise Cracker is the character who makes fun of others in the group but not in a mean or offensive way.
- The Trophy Wife is a female character who is appreciated for appearance and maintaining a 'classy' outward appearance. Normally rich. RACHEL
- The Charmer is a character who is trying to make a love connection. Flirty and usually male. JOEY
- The Bigmouth is a loud and brash character, but not horrible. The Bigmouth is not as smart as they think and often end up causing comedy when they get things wrong.
- The Sage is an older and wise person within the show. This personally normally gives advice or has more understanding than other characters. PHOEBE
- The Unruly Woman is a woman that is NOT a typical motherly type, preferring career or other things over caring directly for her family. JEN
- The Stick is an uptight character that often is upset at change or a break in the rules. More laughed at than laughed with. ROY
- The Bully is not always horrible but attempts to dominate or be better than other characters.
- The Goofball is the zany, clumsy or unusual character. Very likable but does not fit in with most mainstream characters. PHOEBE

SITCOMS: GENRE, INTERTEXTUALITY & KEY TERMS

INTERTEXTUALITY

- Intertextuality is an 'interrelationship between texts'. These references are made to influence the audience and add layers of depth to a product, based on the audiences' prior knowledge and understanding.
- The relationship between different media texts is very important and in sitcom it can be used in a variety of ways.
- Homage and parody are the most popular forms of intertextual references in sitcom.
- Intertextuality can be subtle, by slight reference to existing works of popular culture.
- It is really important to think of the context of each sitcom to understand how Intertextuality comes into effect.

HOMAGE

- A homage may be a reference to a text, person or event that the writers, directors or even production company think highly of.
- In the Big Bang Theory the cast regularly refer to Marvel Comics and DC Universe through their costume and narrative. This is more because the organisation has a high regard for the films and is a great referential point to help with the representation of a 'geek' or 'nerd'.

F.R.I.E.N.D.S includes Phoebe singing 'Favourite Things' from The Sound of Music and the Spanish Soap Opera Tres Destinos (1993) about a woman who is not fit in with most mainstream characters. PHOEBE


- Todorov Narrative Theory

There are three narratives running through the 23 minute episode. Consider how each applies to the theory.

1. A state of equilibrium (All is as it should be). 2. A disruption of that order by an event. 3. A recognition that the disorder has occurred. 4. An attempt to repair the damage of the disruption. 5. A return or restoration of a NEW equilibrium.

PROPP CHARACTER THEORY

If we were to apply Propp’s theory of Narrative to our two sitcoms we can see two very different readings that make for a considerably strong comparison.

THE IT CROWD

HERO(ES)

- We can see 3 heroes in Roy, Moss and Jen, by the programme being named after this small group of individuals, and that each of them have a mini narrative arc through this episode.
- We are clearly following their journeys. (heroes journey). VILLAIN
- Negative One, the challenger to Moss in the 8+ group, is identified as the villain who challenges one our heroes. The villain is not evil or extreme like in some genres such as dramas and thrillers and he is used purely for humorous effect.

HELPERS

- The three characters; Roy, Moss and Jen change regularly within each narrative arc. The three characters; Roy, Moss and Jen change regularly within each narrative arc. For this one episode we definitely have Rachel arrive to fulfil the hero position. Her ‘journey’ to discover life in the city after running away from her wedding will take up the majority of this episode.

DODGERS

- In other episodes of the programme, can be identified as the hero, villain, provider and helper depending on the arc of each storyline; however, in this episode he fulfills only a minor role of facilitating a narrative enigma.

HERO

- For this one episode we definitely have Rachel arrive to fulfil the hero position. Her ‘journey’ to discover life in the city after running away from her wedding will take up the majority of this episode.

HELPERS

- The other 5 characters would therefore take on the role of the helper(s) all coming to Rachel’s aide in different ways during the episode.

It would take a further and deeper reading of Friends as an entire series to understand that Ross is the protagonist/main character in the narrative. The antagonist/character that is against the hero. Will Moss win? Will Jen find out what she is missing? Will Roy ever prove to Alistair he is not a window cleaner? Linear - a narrative that is in chronological/straight forward order. Set-Up - how the narrative is started Conflict - the problem the character (hero) must resolve Resolution - how and when the problem is fixed (usually by the hero) Episode - each episode is separate to the next. Narrative Arc - stories usually have a beginning, middle and end. Flashback – is an scene that takes the narrative back in time, often used to recount events that happened before the story’s primary sequence of events to fill in crucial back-story.

TODOROV NARRATIVE THEORY

3. A recognition that the disorder has occurred. 4. An attempt to repair the damage of the disruption. 5. A return or restoration of a NEW equilibrium.
**Sitcom: A television or radio series in which the same set of characters are involved in various amusing situations. The abbreviation sitcom is used.**

**Background Context**

- First released September 1994 in the US and April 1995 in the UK.
- Created by David Crane and Marta Kauffman.
- Writers of Dream On (a 6 season sitcom that ran in 1990).
- An ensemble of relatively new actors.
- Created for NBC in the pilot season as president of NBC wanted a sitcom based on “friends sharing memorable periods of their lives with surrogate family members.”
- NBC would go on to make Friends their cornerstone of Thursday night comedy (replacing Cheers).
- Netflix’s first release in the genre of Comedy.

**Sitcom: A television or radio series in which the same set of characters are involved in various amusing situations. The abbreviation sitcom is used.**

**Media Language & Representation**

### F.R.I.E.N.D.S. Contexts

#### Twister Generation
- The young characters have a very care-free attitude to life and relationships.
- They model a very relaxed social etiquette.
- The “twister” generation in the 1990’s America was the generation of young adults that seem permanently trapped between adolescence and adulthood.
- It could be said that it takes 10 seasons of Friends for them all to move on to adulthood.

#### American Dream / City of Dreams
- Rachel’s arrival in the city seems to represent the next young adult hoping to pursue a new life in the city.
- The short introductions to each character indicate that each having positive relationships with the other gender within the sequence.
- This reflects the ‘metrosexual’ a term coined in 1994.

#### New-Man / Metrosexual
- We are introduced to 3 characters in Friends that epitomise the term New-Man.
- Talking about their emotions, supportive of each other and having positive relationships with each other.
- This reflects the ‘metrosexual’ a term coined in 1994.

#### Cultural Diversity
- We meet 6 white middle-class characters enjoying luxury time in a spacious apartment and comfortable coffee shop. This is not truly reflective of the 1990’s New York City and is actually quite a limited cross-section of culture.

**Sound & Music**

- **Opening music:** The music over the montages is designed around the original opening song, considering the connotations of this music. The lyrics “I’ll be there for you” links to the theme and characters in the sitcom, based on a group of 6 friends.
- **Studio audience:** FRIENDS is filmed in front of a live studio audience and there are regular instances where we can hear the laughter. This is known as “canned laughter”.
- **Comic timing:** The jokes are more obvious with strategic pauses, while The IT Crowd relies on offbeat humour and visual signals to generate laughs from the studio audience.

**Cinematography & Framing**

- The various wide angles that cut between close-ups allow lots of movement for cameras in the studio.
- There are lots of long shots with all the characters in the frame as well as close ups and mid shots to show the relationships between the characters.

**Editing**

- The editing is very traditional and typical of a multi-camera production filmed in a studio.
- The sequence is comprised of many quick cuts, motivated cuts and continuity editing to make the scene seem very natural and realistic. There are more traditional dissolves and fades used between scenes to represent the passing of time or change of location.

### Mise en scène (CLAMPS = Costumes - Lighting - Acting - Make-up - Props - Setting)

- **Costume:** Rachel in wedding dress (unusual and funny) other characters in casual clothing.
- **Lighting:** natural and high key, connotes realism.
- ** Acting:** facial expression of Rachel is frustration. Ross is worried.
- **Make-up:** natural, connoting realism.
- **Props:** coffee cups, newspapers, phone creates realism.
- **Setting:** coffee shop, a relatable location to the audience.

**Representation: New York City**

- NYC is represented as a ‘place of adventure, independence and opportunity as the ‘city of dreams’. This is seen by Rachel running out on her wedding (and life) to go to the big city and pursue a different life, with opportunities.
- Friends living together and hanging out in a coffee shop also represents the city as somewhere that is slow-paced, relaxing and suited to young pre-married adults.
- New York is also known as ‘The Big Apple’ due to it’s wide range of ethnicities that live in the city.
- However, having 6 characters that do not represent the ethnicities in NYC does not reflect the social context at the time or even now.

**Representation of Ethnicity**

- We later realise in further episodes that Ross and Monica (who are brother and sister) are Jewish. Joey is from Italian decent, but nonetheless, the characters do not represent New York City.

**Representation of Gender**

- In Friends, we have a split balance of male to female characters.
- Each of the characters has their own personality type and this provides a sense of equality across the programme.
- It is clear though that each of the characters is further defined by their relationships with the other gender within the sequence.
  - Traditionally, male characters should be looked after by their fathers before getting married and getting looked after by their husband. However, this is challenged - Rachel walks out of her wedding.
  - Rachel’s father challenges her choices and Monica and her friends do not challenge her choice.
  - Traditionally, female characters should remain where they were brought up, around their family. However, in Friends, Monica and Phoebe are independent women living away from where they grew up.
  - Traditionally, female characters should listen to male characters and what they say, including how they appear. However, Rachel clashes with her father over belongings and what she should do. Rachel listens to Monica’s advice.
  - Traditionally, Male characters should run the household/property and be the superior figure. However, Monica is in charge of their property and in the episode does not report to any male figures.

**Other characters to consider**

- Rachel and her ex fiancé Barry and her father.
- Ross by his ex-wife.
- Monica by Paul ‘The Wine Guy’
- Phoebe by her past relationship
- Chandler by his mother
- Joey by his lust for women

**Feminist Approaches**

- Friends is particularly good for discussion when it comes to looking at Feminist approaches and how other female characters support each other. Rachel, through Monica, receives advice on how to be strong and independent - discussing their independence away from male control and what is expected in society.
- As a typical sitcom, these society expectations are of course very out-of-date and the female representations in these episodes are much more developed from sitcom and television programmes in history.
SITCOM: F.R.I.E.N.D.S. & The IT Crowd

AUDIENCE AND INDUSTRY

INDUSTRY KEY TERMS

EXHIBITION
The broadcasting of a media product through the platform it has been designed for.

STREAMING
A format of exhibiting a media text by the constant delivery of a digital multimedia product by the audience and from the provider.

CONGLOMERADE
A multi-national company that is engaged in many different industries through the operations of the subsidiaries that they own.

DISPOSITION
The sale of a media product through multiple platforms at a national and international level.

PRODUCTION
The process of idea generation, recruiting the cast and crew and then making the media product.

SUBSIDIARY
A company that is owned by a larger organisation. They report to the parent company rather than the conglomerate that owns them.

SYNDICATE
The licensing or sale of material for broadcasting by several television channels.

COMPANIES INVOLVED

The IT Crowd
Talkback Thames
Delightful industries Netflix
Channel 4

F.R.I.E.N.D.S
Warner bros.
Bright/Kauffman/ Crane
NBC Universal/Comedy Crane
Central

SYNDICATION
NBC Television is a Subsidiary of NBCUniversal and is the parent company to NBC Television, DreamWorks Animation and Universal Pictures.

PARENT COMPANY
A company within a conglomerate that has many smaller (subsidiaries) working underneath them.

NBCUniversal is the parent company to NBC Television, DreamWorks Animation and Universal Pictures.

DISTRIBUTION
The sale of a media product through multiple platforms at a national and international level.

The IT Crowd is streamed in the UK between Netflix UK or All4 and audience members who choose to watch it.

PRODUCTION PROCESSES

TARGETING AUDIENCES

POST-PRODUCTION

LATEX

IN RELEASING SITCOMS TO THE AUDIENCE:

With both The IT Crowd and Friends being weekly broadcast programmes there is a specific audience that both Channel 4 and NBC were trying to cater for. Since they have both stopped broadcasting they have now been released on streaming platforms. Friends is on Netflix and The IT Crowd is now on Netflix in the UK. The contract for Friends in the UK is currently held by Comedy Central UK and consistently play on their channels every day. Streaming gives audiences access to their content all at one go and therefore the audience accessing the content could be more fluid and less fixed by a schedule and commercial strategy. The IT Crowd would therefore still be picking up an audience many years after it completed broadcast.

PRODUCING PROCESS

The production process diagram is a very American example. The IT Crowd did not have to go through any piloting or green-light processes. Linehan was asked to write the sitcom for Channel 4 based on his previous success with Father Ted.

CONGLOMERADE

The sale of a media product through multiple platforms at a national and international level.

CONGLOMERADE

A company within a conglomerate that has many smaller (subsidiaries) working underneath them.

Audience

Primary

- Channel 4 was the ideal channel to target a male audience. They bought the series on the back of the success of Friends which was already Pick-up the full order for the programme and specify the importance of running orders.  This is the area where the network will decide if the audience is large enough to sustain a programme.  If the programme gets the go ahead to go into production then this is called 'Greenlighting'.

Secondary

- Friday nights is also when the audience will be watching The IT Crowd on Friday nights from Channel 4.

The target audience is both genders in their early twenties who might relate to the characters.

- This is the reason why they had 3 males and 3 females for the main characters.

- When Friends was broadcast in the UK Channel 4 chose a similar timeslot as the US, but on a Friday night.

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SOCIAL INTERACTION

- Fan community

AUDIENCE THEORY

To remember the U&G theory, think of P.I.E.S.

Personal identity

- (The need or satisfaction of relating to the media product, in the characters, locations, storylines etc)

- to compare lives to those of the characters.

Information

- (The need or satisfaction of getting information from the media product)

- Learning about other people's way of life e.g. in NYC

- Learning about the different themes

Entertainment

- (The need or satisfaction of escaping from everyday lives and being entertained)

- Funny and enjoyable storylines

Social Interaction

- (The need or satisfaction of escaping from everyday lives and being entertained)

- Sharing on social media/being part of a community online