

How does the royle  
family challenge the  
conventions in a  
sitcom essay sample



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The aim of a sitcom is to make us laugh. It does this by showing the main character's situations in a humorous way, which the audience will find funny. Most sitcoms are half an hour long. In most sitcoms there are a small group of characters that centre around a few settings. The plots of sitcoms are usually contained within one episode and most problems are resolved within an episode. I am going to compare a traditional sitcom that displays these features, ' Friends' with one that challenges the conventions, ' The Royle Family'.

Often sitcoms challenge the conventions by using different types of humour such as taboo or dysphemisms or a different plot structure. The title music is very important to a sitcom as it sets the mood for the show. In the more traditional sitcoms such as ' Friends', ' Happy days' and ' only fools and horses' the theme tunes are upbeat and cheery and their lyrics relate to either the title or the theme of the show. For example the ' Friends' theme tune has the lyrics " I'll be there for you.... " Whereas ' The Royle family' uses grim, sober music.

The opening credits of ' The Royle family' do not show clips from previous episodes like ' Friends' but show each member of the family sitting down as the actor's name appears on the screen. The effect of this on the audience sets them up for a sitcom that is different from the norm. Some of the more conventional sitcoms use characters that are stereotypes. They do this so that the humour used by the characters can be exaggerated. An example of this would be Joey from ' Friends' who is the stereotype of an Italian-American ladies man, because this stereotype has been used by the writers can play on his background to make the audience laugh.

<https://assignbuster.com/how-does-the-royle-family-challenge-the-conventions-in-a-sitcom-essay-sample/>

One of the ways 'The Royle family' fits in with the conventions is the way they also use stereotype of a fat, lazy middle-aged man who watches television all the time. Characters are especially important in family based sitcoms because we can identify the character who most fits our age range. The conventions of the language used in sitcoms depends a lot on which country it originates from. If the sitcom is English e. g. 'Only fools and horses' it may use cockney slang if it is based in London or informal language if it is a conventional American sitcom such as 'Friends'.

But in most conventional sitcoms regardless of nationality there is very little swearing and even if it is used then it is unlikely to be serious. I think the reason for this is because traditional sitcoms are sometimes on earlier in the evening and so attract a more family based audience. In comparison 'The Royle family' is on later after the watershed and so breaks these conventions by using frequent swearing and dysphemisms which might not be suitable for children e. g. Jim says "I couldn't give a shiny shite"

Another language feature used both in 'Friends' and in 'The Royle Family' is catchphrases which are used by both Joey in 'friends'; "How you doing?" and Jim in 'The Royle family'; "My arse...". Catchphrases are used to create a sense of familiarity between the audience and the characters so that the audience feel as if they know the characters quite well. Although swearing is unusual in traditional sitcoms they often use sexual puns or double entendre so that taboo subjects can be used without having to mention them directly. Most of the more traditional sitcoms use a similar plot structure.

This structure involves a problem arising at the beginning of the episode, tension being created and finally the original problem being resolved at the end. Most of the plots are contained within one episode but sometimes there are storylines that are continued throughout the series such as Monica and Chandler's wedding in 'Friends'. This can have either a positive or a negative impact on the audience. It can make the audience want to carry on watching if they have started watching at the beginning of the storyline or feel isolated if they have started watching the storyline near the end of the series.

On the other hand 'The Royle family' does not have plots contained within one episode and if a problem is introduced then it won't be solved within the same episode. This can create a sense of familiarity with the audience as they have slow moving storylines. This is another way that 'The Royle family' breaks the conventions of a sitcom. The types of humour used in sitcoms both conventional and un-conventional depend greatly on the personality of the character.

For example in 'The Royle family' Denise is portrayed as quite a dim-witted character so the writers can use pratfalls effectively as to the audience these seem almost normal to the character. Another example would be Chandler from 'Friends' who uses sarcasm on some of the other, slower characters such as 'Joey' so that the audience can laugh at the character on the receiving end of his sarcasm. Confounded expectations are also used to try and surprise the audience by making characters do the unexpected or having situations where the unusual happens. E. g. In 'The Royle family'

Barbara: " Can I make you a nice bacon buttie, Dave? " Dave: " Oh yeah, Barbara, that would be nice" Barbara: " Anthony, go and but some bacon under please. " The audience would have expected Barbara to go and make the sandwich so the surprise would make them laugh. The time in regular sitcoms goes quite quickly and in the show two or more days may pass. The reason for this is because the plot structure of the problem arising and being resolved would not be able to be fitted in regular time. ' The Royle family' on the other hand uses almost regular time and so moves slowly and a storyline cannot be resolved within one episode.

The effect this has on an audience would, I think would make them get more involved with the characters because they feel as if they are experiencing a real half an hour with this family. The way a sitcom is presented to the audience has a very important impact on the way we view the show. In most sitcoms the camera shots are polished and professional and you can hardly tell there's a camera there. ' The Royle family' breaks these conventions by using shaky camera work to give it a slightly amateur ' Home video' feel. The impact this has on the audience is that it gives them the feel that they are stepping into this family's life.

The Royle family' also uses the same type of shot all the way through, the close up and you barely see any real interaction unlike a traditional sitcom such as ' friends', which uses mid-shots so that you can clearly see actions between the characters, as this is where most of the humour in conventional sitcom comes from. I think that using close ups is a good way of showing emotion but in a comedy this is not very appropriate and may make the

sitcom have to rely on verbal humour only. The use of sound effects in both 'The Royle family' and 'Friends' are similar.

They both use everyday sounds only such as the telephone ringing and doors opening. This creates a sense of realism for the audience and makes use feel more at home. The one sound effect that most conventional sitcoms use but is not used in 'The Royle family' is canned laughter or the use of a studio audience (which is used in 'Friends'). The effect canned laughter has on the audience is that it informs them of when a joke has been told but can sometimes become repetitive and annoying if the audience do not find the joke funny themselves.

The effect of not having laughter canned or otherwise in 'The Royle family' makes the audience have to discover the humour themselves and laugh at the jokes they find funny not just the ones which are supposed to be. In conclusion after looking at all the evidence I can clearly see that 'The Royle family' not only challenges the conventions but also breaks them. It uses a different plot structure and a slower dialogue. Although it challenges the 'rules' by which most sitcoms follow it does so with reason. It is on later than a lot of sitcoms and is not aimed at a family audience. 'The Royle family' tries also a lot of different ways of presenting the sitcom and includes different types of camera shots and extreme close ups.

There are no sound effects other than everyday sounds in 'The Royle family' and there is no use of canned laughter or a studio audience either. The language used in 'The Royle family' is almost always informal, uses dysphemisms and swearing. But saying all this there are still ways that it

sticks to the conventions. It is the same length as most sitcoms and uses stereotypes effectively. Although 'The Royle family' keeps to the rules it could never be classed as a 'traditional' sitcom.

**Read next:**

Analysis Of Star Wars - A New Hope