

Coronation street  
clearly fits the genre  
of a soap opera  
essay sample



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A soap opera is an ongoing, open ended, multi-stranded drama serial on television or radio. It can be broadcast daily or several times a week. The main quality that defines a soap is that it is a serial. A serial narrative is a story told through a series of separate, but linked episodes, representing real life in real time over a day, eg. Coronation Street, Emmerdale, Eastenders. They first began on the radio stations in America which relied on advertising for their revenue, and companies could either use adverts or sponsor a whole programme, eg now Harveys furniture store sponsors Coronation Street.

Radio's biggest audience were housewives. At that time very few married women went out to work and so most would spend the day at home doing housework. Obviously they were an ideal audience for companies supplying household goods such as soap, detergent and cleaning goods. These companies needed radio stations to produce the kind of programmes that would attract a large audience of the type of women that would buy their products. Stations came up with the idea of drama serials that centred on the home and various domestic situations. They were immediately successful.

This is where the name soap opera originates from. ' Soap' because they were sponsored by soap and ' opera' because they were dramatic. In America after the war radio soap operas started becoming less popular and people were turning to the new invention of the television. Due to soaps being so popular on the radio before the TV was invented it was decided that soaps should be transferred to television. Coronation Street is a popular soap

opera with an average audience of eight million (BARB figure) and was also one of the very first British soaps.

Coronation Street first started in 1960 and is still going today. Just like any other soap opera, in 'Corrie' there is a lot of conflict between characters, eg. Stella and Sinita dislike each other due to Sinita having an affair with Stella's husband. There are lots of weddings, births, funerals and personal/ domestic issues in order to keep the audience interested and to portray real life more dramatically. The audience has a special relationship with the major characters in a serial, as it has a chance to get to know them over the weeks and years, eg.

Ken Barlow has been in Coronation Street for over 30 years. Serial characters do change across episodes and they get older and occasionally die and characters are made to have a life in between episodes (you hear about an event but don't necessarily see it. ) Each serial episode is multi-stranded and leaves loose ends for the next episode to continue, and usually the episode ends with a narrative cliffhanger that keeps the viewer in suspense until the next episode to keep a loyal audience base.

At the start of an episode of Coronation Street it is always a precise time (usually morning but it varies) and carries on from that time and doesn't jump to the next day. This portrays real life as though real time. There are many different types of characters, many conforming to stereotypes, in Coronation Street and soap operas in general, e. g the nosey neighbour (Norris,) the young couple (Chesney and Katie,) the bad boy (Ryan,) the

fiesty woman (Tracey,) the powerful matriarch (Rita). Coronation Street is a lot like other soaps including Eastenders and Emmerdale.

They are similar because they are all serials and they all show 24 hours in one episode. As Coronation Street and Emmerdale are on ITV they include advert breaks, which are timed in with the story lines, whereas Eastenders is on BBC and doesn't include adverts. All three soaps also show domestic issues that the audience find interesting and can somehow relate to. Corrie, Eastenders and Emmerdale are all 30 minutes long and often have hour long specials at certain occasions such as Christmas and New Year or if a spectacular event is happening, eg. shooting, robberies, falls, deaths, crashes and weddings.

Staple storylines involve personal conflicts. Current examples at the time of writing are: Carla's story centres on fighting back from her recent problems and making a relationship with Peter work Sunita takes a chance on Karl as her marriage breaks down McDonalds' marriage also breaks down as they fought for a child and then each other Kevin's affair broke up his marriage when he fathered baby Jack and now he's trying to move on Eileen and Paul have had a difficult time in their quest to be together.

Sophie and Sian's lesbian romance has highs and lows including their sad parting Fiz and baby Hope find peace, after John's incredibly violent life of murder and violence Tracy tries to find her place in Weatherfield after release from prison All soaps have multiple narratives although they sometimes give over whole episodes to one or two characters. Although these three soaps are all similar in that they are all based on domestic life

they are also different in some ways. Emmerdale is set in the Yorkshire countryside and has different surroundings of farms, church and the village.

Corrie is set in an urban area in an old part of a northern city (Salford or Manchester) while Eastenders is a London based soap. Each one uses local characteristics, eg northern or Cockney accents. All three soaps depend on communal areas like markets, pubs and especially cafes (Roy's Rolls in Corrie, Beale's in Eastenders, the Post Office/Cafe in Emmerdale) in order for characters to interact outside the home. Only Corrie regularly features a work place (the factory) whereas everything else is based in individual homes.

Production techniques for the soaps tend to be similar, with a regular, stable cast and filming style such as frequent use of medium shots, close ups, two shots and over-the-shoulder shots to convey interpersonal relationships and reactions. Soaps are very lucrative for television, either literally for attracting big money for adverts or for guaranteeing big audience figures at peak viewing times.

They are known as 'bankable' programmes and have the prime spots in the schedules. Eg Corrie is on during peak family viewing time at 7.0 Sponsors are prepared to pay large sums to be associated with Corrie as their company branding is featured at the opening and closing credits as well as the advert breaks. Sometimes there is product placement, as can be seen in the still below of the Harvey's van by the Rovers.

Because soaps are centred on domestic life and have dominant female characters, their audience attracts women who stereotypically spend the

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household budget. Therefore advertisers and sponsors of household products and goods will pay well for publicity. The following quote is from [www.tvmedia.co.uk/advertising-on-itv](http://www.tvmedia.co.uk/advertising-on-itv): ' The cost varies according to the target audience and reflects its amount of television viewing.

Audience delivery is measured in television ratings (TVRs). Each spot therefore has a value depending on the size of the audience and the demographic, for example, a spot in Coronation Street, delivering 21 TVRs, is worth 10 times more than a slot in This Morning delivering 2.1 TVRs. ' Coronation Street clearly fits the genre of a soap opera due to many factors such as: it is serial and carries on the story.

Five episodes of Corrie are broadcasted each week, for 52 weeks of the year each with never ending storylines. We can see it is a soap by the target audience (women) and how the episodes cater for them, eg. issues shown, characters' personalities, events that occur and the time that the episodes are shown. It is interesting and can also make viewers feel like part of a community or feel involved with a continuing story line when they watch. It encourages its viewers to speculate what happens next by its dramatic storylines and cliff hangers.