

Meet the Family

Soap Operas

A. Definition

A soap opera is a long running drama series, typically shown on television, that focuses on the personal lives and relationships of a set of characters.

B. Characters

The characters are the core part of a soap opera and most feature around 20 main characters! Although all the characters do not feature in every episode. The types of characters found in Soap Operas are based on stereotypes. These include:

- The Cheery Pub Landlord
- The Criminal / Gangster
- The Nagging Mum
- The Stropky Teenager
- The Gossip

C. Key Conventions

1. Each episode is fairly short (often about 30 minutes long) and 3-4 new episodes are screened each week. The scenes are short to maintain the audience's interest and to build tension.
- 2. Each episode often focusses on a few different continuous storylines or narratives involving a range of the main characters and cross-cuts between each story throughout the episode. The narratives often deal with real life issues that the audience can relate to, for example, family problems, or money issues.
- 3. Each episode usually begins with a 'hook' (a continuation of one of the narratives explored in the previous episode) and ends with a cliff hanger (a moment of suspense that isn't resolved until the next episode). This is an effective way of ensuring the audience watch the next episode!
- 4. All Soaps are usually set in a central area, for example, a street. Albert Square is the street where EastEnders is set, and Ramsey Street is where Neighbours is set.
5. In British Soap Operas the characters are usually normal, working class people that the audience can relate to. They often reflect the target audience. For example, Hollyoaks is made up of a cast mostly of teenagers of young adults as this is their target audience.

D. Physical Skills

Body Language	How an actor uses their body to communicate meaning. For example, crossing your arms could mean you are fed up.
Posture	The position an actor holds their body when sitting or standing. For example, an upright posture.
Gait	The way an actor walks.
Facial Expressions	A form of non-verbal communication that expresses the way you are feeling, using the face.
Gestures	A movement of part of the body, especially a hand or the head, to express an idea of meaning.
Stance	The way you position yourself when standing to communicate your role. An elderly person would have a different stance to a child!

E. Vocal Skills

Projection	Ensuring your voice is loud and clear for the audience to hear.
Volume	How loudly or quietly you say something. (Shouting, whispering).
Tone	The way you say something to communicate your emotions. (e.g., angry, worried, shocked tone of voice).
Pace	The speed of what you say.
Pause	Moments of pause can create tension or show what you are thinking.
Accent	Use of an accent tells the audience where your character is from.
Pitch	How high or low your voice is.
Emphasis	Changing the way, a word or part of a sentence is said, to emphasise it. (Make it stand out).

