



# TQEA MEDIA STUDIES

# THE AVENGERS

YOU MAY BE SHOWN A CLIP FROM THE AVENGERS AND BE ASKED TO ANALYSE FOR LANGUAGE AND REPRESENTATIONS. YOU ALSO NEED TO KNOW HOW THE 1960S CONTEXT INFLUENCES THE SHOW AND ITS IMPACT ON AUDIENCES



## KEY VOCABULARY

**Espionage** - the practice of spying or of using spies, typically by governments to obtain political and military information.

**Pastiche** – a media product that imitates another product through visual style, media language or narrative (used in *The Avengers*, as it imitates popular spy thriller films, such as James Bond, in a light-hearted way, spy-fi)

**Permissive** - A person or society that is **permissive** allows behaviour that other people might disapprove of. The Avengers would have been viewed as permissive at the time due to the sexual innuendos and Peel's provocative costumes.

## KEY FACTS

1. The Avengers is a British spy (espionage) drama.
2. The set episode, "Grave Diggers" aired on 7th October 1965.
3. It was scheduled to air on ITV on Saturdays at 9.05pm every week, which is considered **Prime Time** viewing. This was after the watershed which was introduced in 1964.
4. The 4th series attracted audiences of around 7 million homes.
5. The show did well internationally, especially in America.
6. ITV had higher budgets for productions than the BBC because of the profits made from advertising.
7. The show is shot in B&W because colour TV sets were not available at the time.
8. Because the show was so popular in the US, the 4th series had an injection of money from the American Broadcasting Company giving each episode high **production values** for the time. This meant they were able to shoot on location and on film (like cinematic movies).
9. Each episode cost £56,000 which was incredibly high for the time.

**Sir Horace Winslip** – railway hospital owner

**Dr Johnson** – foreign spy

**Miss Thirwell** – foreign spy

**Fred** – train porter, Winslow's butler

**Nurse Spray** – nurse, thinks it's a real hospital

**Baron** – foreign spy

**Dr Marlow** – British scientist radar expert

## MISE-EN-SCENE

1. Peel is modern; she has a round floating fire, curved sofas and a sports car.
2. Steed is traditional; he wears a bowler hat, carries a cane and has a chesterfield sofa.
3. Peel wears suggestive clothing (her black leather cat suit).
4. She lives alone in a city, works as a spy and Steed often taps her bottom!
5. All of this would have been seen as permissive and quite risky.

## PLOT

The country's early warning radar system is failing intermittently, and Steed and Emma are charged with the task of finding out why. The trail leads from a graveyard to a hospital run exclusively for the benefit of railway men where, unbeknownst to the eccentric financier, a plan is being hatched to disable Britain's entire defense system with jamming devices hidden in coffins.

## CAMERAWORK and EDITING

1. Most of The Avengers was shot using a single camera. It was heavy and difficult to move.
2. As a result we see less editing such as shot reverse shot and more movement such as panning from one character to another.
3. This makes it seem much slower paced than modern crime dramas.
4. Mostly we see mid shots and long shots with the occasional close up to draw emphasis.
5. Most edits that take place are to move to a new scene, rather than within a scene
6. The majority of edits are simple cuts.

## SOUND

1. The narrative is carried by dialogue between the two primary characters; both have noticeably upper class British accents.
2. Steed always addresses Peel formally, never using her first name.
3. Leit motif (a small part of the theme tune) is used to indicate the heroes (usually Steed, Emma)
4. There is significant use of innuendo between Peel and Steed.
5. Non diegetic orchestral music is used to build tension.
6. Non diegetic playful flute is used to indicate the flirtatious relationship between Steed and Peel

## CONTEXT and REPRESENTATION

1. Peel represents the new '**working woman**' who is more than just a housewife and mother. She is a martial arts expert, a certified genius and most importantly exudes confidence in her body language.
2. Emma is represented as being **equal to Steed in her role as a spy** which was a breakthrough in 1965 and shows the changing attitudes towards women at the time.
3. Emma is still **sexually objectified by her outfits** such as leather catsuits and camerawork that focuses on her assets.
4. Steed is still **represented as the stereotypical lead male**, with power and authority which is shown through his demeanour and his gentlemen style outfits.
5. Emma represents the **younger emerging sexual revolution** of the 60s.
6. There is a lack of LGBT representation in The Avengers as **there are no Gay or Lesbian characters**.
7. John Steed represents the older generational values of **traditional Post-War Britain**.
8. Steed fought in World War 2 - he **believes in his duty to the queen and country**.
9. His costume helps to communicate this through the bowler hat, umbrella and suit which are **symbolic of the British 'city' gentlemen**.
10. Steed's accent and choice of language also reflects his conservative views - **refers to Emma as Mrs Peel**.
11. Emma represents the values of the **swinging sixties and the changing attitudes of youth**. She is younger and more carefree.
12. Emma is still always respectful of her elders and shows commitment to duty in that she goes on her mission with Steed without question. **This shows the tension for young people** in the 60's in that they were still required to follow certain rules.
13. There are no characters of any other ethnicity in Grave Diggers **apart from white**.

**John Steed** – hero and quintessential English gentleman. Styled as stereotypically British to appeal to the overseas market.

**Emma Peel** – Steed equal and representative of the new 'working woman'. Brave, independent, yet still objectified and sexualised.