

# HOW TO STUDY TELEVISION

*How to Study Television*, edited by John Peck and Martin Coyle, is a companion volume to Macmillan's *How to Study Literature* series.

# **How to Study Television**

Keith Selby and Ron Cowdery



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For Susan and Debbie

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## Editors' preface

If you are a student taking Media or Communication Studies, the chances are that you are looking for a book on television that will not only help you to come to grips with the technical aspects of media production, but also help you to formulate your critical response in a clear, analytical way. The aim of *How To Study Television* is to offer you guidance on both these important tasks by providing not only the sort of technical information you need, but also a critical method that will allow you to explore your insights and ideas about a range of different types of television programme.

The opening chapter introduces you to the five main areas of analysis when dealing with television: Construction, Audience, Narration, Category and Agency. These terms are then explored in Chapter 2 in relation to a single still – an advertisement for airmail letters. Chapter 3 develops the analysis of the advertisement further by discussing the effect of camera angles and visual and cultural codes. These two chapters are intended to offer you points of reference for your own work and also for the chapters that follow. These deal, in turn, with how to analyse an episode from a police series (*The Bill*), from a TV sitcom (*Fawlty Towers*), from a news broadcast (*News at Ten*), and an episode from a TV soap – *Neighbours*. In each case, practical advice is given on what to look for and how to interrelate all the areas that make television the complex social, political and aesthetic medium it is.

Following these chapters on the different kinds of television programme is a chapter on essay-writing and how to organise a written response. The chapter takes for its example television gameshows, but the advice given will help you with writing about all types of television output. Finally, at the end of the book, is an extensive glossary of terms used in the discussion and production of television programmes. Understanding such terms is best done by seeing them put into practice, which is exactly what *How To Study Television* does. At once a guide to current ideas about the media and a

practical textbook that will help you develop your own critical responses, *How To Study Television* is also a rich source of suggestions that should further your enjoyment of studying television.

John Peck  
Martin Coyle

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