

TASK

You are now going to watch a number of trailers. On each you should answer the following questions:

How does the trailer show that this film is worth coming to see?

Whilst the marketing campaign uses genre to gain our interest it must also show us how this new film is different to others in the same genre category. The trailer must make clear the hook of each film. The hook might be linked to the genre in that it is an unusual mix – say a musical horror, or a star who usually plays a different role or it might be something distinct like the innovative use of special effects.

Look closely at the four trailers included here. What do you think is the hook of each of the film trailers ?

What are the features of a trailer?

Trailers are not 'mini-films'. They are a genre in their own right and have their own set of easily recognisable conventions. Trailers are designed to capture our attention and hold it for a short space of time. They give us just enough information to raise our curiosity but not enough to spoil the story of the film. They create a mood or atmosphere and heighten our anticipation of what is to come. In short, they tease but they don't tell.

In some ways watching a trailer is like doing a jigsaw puzzle - we're given some information as to plot and character and our task is to fill in the missing pieces in the time available. The style in which the information is conveyed is fast-moving and requires our attention one hundred per cent of the time. To watch a film at this pace would be impossible - we could not cope with the input and would 'switch off'. However, we enjoy the roller coaster effect of a trailer and the mental challenge it presents.

The sound is very important in a trailer, particularly the music, which swiftly manipulates our emotions and creates an atmosphere. The voiceover, a feature of advertising, is used to summarise the story and emphasise credit information where appropriate. Like every other element of the trailer, the voiceover also looks to promote the film by building our anticipation.

Here are some of the more recognisable conventions of a trailer:

- They highlight the 'best bits' of the film; the very funny, the very sad, the action-packed, the bizarre
- We are not shown the story in narrative order
- They showcase the stars of the film
- Some visual images stay on screen for only just enough time for our mind to realise what we are seeing
- Conversations between characters usually consist of one line each
- Unusual angles are often used to show events or characters
- Action is interspersed with credits on screen
- Voiceovers are used to tell the story and give credit information

- Music plays an important role in creating atmosphere
- The title might not appear until the end
- The trailer builds to a climax, where it ends

Can you add any other conventions?

Try watching two or three of the trailers without the visual images (i.e. close your eyes!) What mood does the music create?

We are all familiar with the traditional man's voice used on trailers. What effect does this have and why do you think the voice was chosen?

How do the trailers you have just seen use these conventions?

What kind of ideas do they give about the films?

How do they stress the genre of the film as well as various other hooks that might attract an audience to want to go and see the film?