# Stage 6, Year 12 - EAL/D: Module C

The Truman Show directed by Peter Lindsay Weir, AM: viewing and responding lesson sequence.

## Module C: Close study of text

**Prescribed text**: The Truman Show directed by Peter Weird, Paramount Home Entertainment (Australasia) P/L.

### Learning focus

Students will develop their knowledge of the characters and themes of ‘The Truman Show’ by responding to the premise, viewing the film trailer and making connections between character dialogue in the trailer and key themes.

#### Lesson goal:

All students will practise active listening skills, re-listening to the trailer and recording notes to complete quotations. All students will comment on whether they feel the premise of the film is engaging and relevant. All students will make connections between quotations from the trailer and key themes.

Most students will justify evaluations of the film’s premise with reference to evidence from the trailer, making connections between the film’s key themes and values of a modern audience. Most students will explain the connections between quotations from the trailer and key themes.

Some students will refer to quotations and film devices from the trailer to give more extended analysis of how key themes are represented in the trailer and the relevance of these themes for a modern audience.

#### Syllabus outcomes and content

* responds to, composes and evaluates a range of complex and sustained texts for understanding, interpretation, critical analysis, imaginative expression and pleasure EAL12-1A
* recognise and explain how and why texts influence and position audiences (ACEEN040)
* identifies, selects and uses language forms, features and structures of texts appropriate to a range of purposes, audiences and contexts, and analyses and evaluates their effects on meaning EAL12-3
* use metalanguage to review and evaluate texts (ACEEA074)
* explore and express ideas and values in texts composed for a range of purposes and audiences (ACEEA097)

All outcomes referred to are from [English EAL/D syllabus](https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/11-12/stage-6-learning-areas/stage-6-english/english-eald-2017) © NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) for and on behalf of the Crown in right of the State of New South Wales, 2017

#### Resources

* Students need a computer with access to the internet and an online learning space (for example Google Classroom)
* Access to shared documents (for example Google Docs) for creation of a class glossary
* Summary of the **premise** of ‘The Truman Show’ adapted from the [Film Education study guide for The Truman Show](http://www.filmeducation.org/resources/film_library/getfilm.php?film=1693) filmeducation.org/resources/film\_library/getfilm.php?film=1693
* **Discussion questions** worksheet
* **Key quotations in the trailer** worksheet
* **Key themes** worksheet
* **Connecting dialogue and themes** worksheet

#### Background information

This sequence can be used prior to viewing of the film ‘The Truman Show’ to build students’ field knowledge of the themes, characters and key events of the film. Alternatively, the tasks could be used after viewing to consolidate learning of the key features.

### Learning sequence

#### Task 1: Responding to the premise of ‘The Truman Show’

1. Consider recording a teacher reading of the worksheet **‘Responding to the premise of The Truman Show**’ for students to listen to and follow with as they read the worksheet.
2. Revise protocols for online respectful online interaction. This may be jointly constructed, with suggestions from student added to a shared document to create a checklist of instructions for how to be respectful and ethical in an online space.
3. Students are to respond to the **discussion questions** by posting in the discussion feed of the online learning space (for example in the Google Classroom feed). Encourage students to use a range of evaluative vocabulary and make connections between the film and other texts they have enjoyed.
4. Teacher should respond to students’ posts with feedback and recasting where appropriate, adding evaluative vocabulary
5. **Optional:** As new vocabulary arises (for example, monitored, fictitious) add to a shared classroom glossary. When enough words have been added, consider assigning each student a word. Students create a Google Documents slide giving details about their assigned word. They might include images, other word forms, synonyms, antonyms and evidence from the text. A useful template to begin this process is the [Frayer Diagram](https://app.education.nsw.gov.au/digital-learning-selector/LearningActivity/Browser?cache_id=240cd) from the Department of Education Digital Learning Selector.

#### Task 2: Listening to The Truman Show trailer- key quotations

1. Students are to view the film trailer.
2. Read the worksheet **Key quotations in the trailer** and identify the missing information. Emphasise that listening actively requires knowing what to listen for (the gaps) and making notes while and after you listen.
3. Students view and listen to the trailer multiple times, filling in the gaps on the worksheet and checking their answers. If working on a platform such as Zoom that allows breakout rooms, students will benefit from conferring and checking answers in small group discussions.
4. **Optional**: While viewing the film, students can be assigned to work in groups. Each group collects information about an assigned character and creates a multimodal presentation and study notes to share with the class. This would be a good point at which to introduce this task and have groups begin making notes supported by reference to resources such as the Gradesaver [Truman Show](https://www.gradesaver.com/the-truman-show/study-guide/character-list) study guide.

#### Task 3: Key themes and quotations from the trailer

1. Students should read the summary of **key themes**. This is written to use plain English where possible and does not assume a viewing of the film. Revise definition of ‘theme’ (refer to the English EAL/D Stage 6 syllabus glossary) and emphasise that these themes are represented in the trailer, but are not the only themes. Consider recording a teacher reading of this worksheet to support lower phase students.
2. Students are to complete the **connecting dialogue and themes** worksheet. The first row is completed as an example. Emphasise that there are no ‘right answers’, and that students are making connections and predicting based only on their pre-viewing understanding of the premise, the trailer and the key themes.
3. **Optional**: Use the notes in this table to write an extended response

#### Where to next

* Responding to the trailer offers further opportunity for identifying and either front-loading or revising film devices, especially distinctive features of this film such as the motif and symbolism (for example, the repeated image of screens). This can be used to create notes to support extended responses.
* Further attention can be given to comparative evaluation of the story premise with other premises. For example, students may read and respond to Weiland, K. 2019. Story Concept and Story Premise: Do You Know the Crucial Difference? (viewed 3 April 2020) [[helpingwritersbecomeauthors.com/story-concept](https://www.helpingwritersbecomeauthors.com/story-concept)]. Students might then make changes to the premise (to be suitable for a new audience or context) and write a narrative extract for Focus on Writing using similar themes.
* Further attention to vocabulary may focus on synonyms for key concepts (for example: authenticity, truthfulness, reality; deception, illusion, manipulation, superficiality, inauthenticity) and development of a class glossary and multimodal presentations to explore themes through key vocabulary. (See optional step 5 for task 1 above)

### The premise of The Truman Show

Read this this description of the **premise** of ‘The Truman Show’ from the [Film Education study guide for The Truman Show](http://www.filmeducation.org/resources/film_library/getfilm.php?film=1693)

The **premise** of a story is a short description of the situation and the important details that **drive the plot** (make the story happen).

‘The Truman Show’ is a film that tells the story of Truman Burbank, a boy who has been **adopted** at birth by a **fictitious** television company - Omnicom.

Omnicom secretly films Truman’s life twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, three hundred and sixty-five days a year, so every second of his life is recorded for ‘live’ television.

Truman doesn’t know this. He doesn’t know that his friends and family are all actors.

He doesn’t know that the events in his life are all carefully **monitored** and controlled by the production crew of the television network.

He doesn’t know he is the star of a television show or that he isn’t living in the real world.

* **fictitious**: not real/ not true
* **adopt**: to take the child of other parents as your own child.
* **monitor**: to watch and/ or listen to someone so you can control them

**Discussion questions**

1. Is this an **interesting** concept (idea) for a film?
2. Do you think this is a **relevant** concept for a modern audience?
3. Based on this concept, what do you think the **main events** of the film will be?
4. Do you think something like this (a television program secretly filming a person’s life) could ever happen in real life? If it did, would you watch the program? (why, why not?)
5. Do you know of any other **narrative texts** (such as film, novels, manga) that are about **similar concepts**?

### Key quotations in the trailer

View the trailer for [The Truman Show](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=loTIzXAS7v4) (duration 2:32). Listen carefully and fill in the missing words to complete each quotation.

Table: quotation activity

|  |
| --- |
| Quotation |
| Truman: ‘Good morning! … Oh, and in case I don’t see ya, good afternoon, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and good night! |
| Announcer: I believe Truman is the first child to have been legally adopted by a  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Christof: While the world he inhabits is counterfeit, there is nothing fake about \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Meryl: Hi honey, look what I got at the checkout- \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Truman: It’s like the whole world revolves around me … everybody seems to be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. |
| Sylvia: Everybody’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Truman … Get out of here … Come and find me. |
| Christof: We accept the reality with which \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. |
| Audience (security guards): What else is on? Yeah, let’s see \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. |
| Truman: I like your pin (‘How’s It Going to End’)- I was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ that myself. |
| Marlon: I’m not in on it Truman, because the last thing I would ever do is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |

### Key themes

This is an introductory summary of some of the key themes shown in the trailer.

**1. Commercialism**

The theme of **commercialism** is important in ‘The Truman Show’. Commercialism means the belief that money and goods are the most important things in life. The Truman Show uses a lot of **product placement**. This is a kind of advertising where a product for sale is shown as part of the show. Everything on The Truman Show is for sale, and Truman’s wife Meryl often speaks directly to the diegetic audience (the audience in the film) to give product placement **spiels**.

**2.** **The power of the media**

A key theme in the film is **the power of the media**. Media means the television, internet, radio, and all other ways information is given to the public. Media is powerful because it can change what people think and how they see the world. The media can hide or show the truth, and it can control people’s behaviour. In the world of the film, Christof controls the media and the audience are the consumers of the media.

**3.** **The search for truth**

A key theme of The Truman Show is the **search for truth**. Everything in Truman’s world is fake. The places are sets. The events are scripted. The people, including his wife and his best friends, are actors. Christof and the people around Truman deceive (lie to) him to manipulate (control) his actions. Truman’s wants to reveal the truth and this leads to the main conflicts of the narrative.

**4.** **Rebellion and freedom**

Two related themes are **rebellion** and **freedom**. Truman does not know this in the beginning, but he is a prisoner who has no freedom. Everything in his life is controlled by Christof. Everyone around Truman **conforms** to the rules of the show. To ‘**conform’**, means to follow the rules and do the same things as everyone around you. The opposite is to **rebel**. As Truman learns more about his situation, he starts to **rebel** and try to find **freedom**.

### Connecting dialogue and themes

Complete each row in the table by adding a quotation from the trailer and an explanation of how the quotation connects to one of the key themes. Use what you know from reading about the **premise** and **key themes**.

Table: theme, evidence and explanation activity

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Theme | Evidence (quotation) | Explanation (what does the evidence show about this theme?) |
| Commercialism | Security guards: “What else is on … let’s see what else is on.” | This comment here shows their attitude to Truman’s life, which they are watching as a TV show. They think it is just another thing that ‘is on’ for their entertainment, and they can turn it on or off when they like. As a commercial product, Truman’s life is seen only for its value to the consumers. |
| Commercialism | Meryl: “Hi honey, look what I got at the checkout … “ |  |
| The power of the media |  |  |
| The search for truth |  |  |