

Knowledge Organiser for: 'The Archers'

Production Context Produced by the BBC, publicly funded broadcaster. Aired on Radio 4 the main spoken word station. Convergence with other technologies. Available on I player and has presence on social media with websites/Twitter etc.	The Target Audience Original audience was agricultural workers. Now audience mainly female ABC1 demographic Older demographic 40 plus listeners who are targeted with storylines which they can relate to	Messages and Values Strong community values. Set in fictional village where everyone knows each other. Family values: based round the Archer family Specific messages delivered through storylines. For example introduced gay marriage and surrogacy and issues of drug supply in rural communities
Social/ Cultural Context Covers contemporary issues which are in the news. Helps shape national debate on issues such as domestic abuse with the Helen & Rob story. Would include real events like the death of Princess Di, foot and mouth outbreak, and 9/11. They would often re-record episodes to do this. In the 1950s it was seen as a way of bring people together and even now people will discuss it but now that happens mostly online	Uses and Gratifications Simple entertainment – Story lines are designed to entertain the audience with trivial events like the 'Flower and Produce' show, they would be engaged by the on-going storylines, reflect that their relationship was better than Rob and Helen's Information and education – Many story lines are designed to inform the public about current issues in agriculture such as intensive farming. The plots educate the audience about issues like domestic violence. Gave information out about domestic abuse - warning signs and helpline, inf about 'Battered Women's Syndrome' Personal identity – The audience relates their own lives to those of the characters, see Helen as a role model as she stood up to Rob Social Interaction – By using social media outlets, the audience can share their reactions to the programme with other listeners Escapism – Many listeners wish they lived in an 'idyllic' English village and use the programme to imagine that they live in Ambridge.	
Historical/Political Context Oldest 'soap opera' has been running for 65 years. Originally for farmers to gain information on crop developments. Broadly neutral politically but covers issues of political interest to rural communities	Representation The tag line of 'An everyday story of country life' positions the listener to believe that the characters are typical of those found in rural communities. A number of stereotypical representations are used. The large scale farmer, the small contractor, the village busybody. These simplify the characters for the audience Increasing representation of gay and minority ethnic characters used to increase audience and to reflect the diversity of British life Clear use of victims and villain following gender stereotypes	
Key Terms and conventions Radio Soap Opera, Public Service Broadcasting, Convergence, OFCOM, licence fee, remit, omnibus, market share, brand identity. cliff-hangers, on going narratives, multi strand narratives, melodrama	Industry Information The radio industry was considered under threat from digital media like Youtube but has embraced change and found new ways of attracting listeners through digital platforms. The BBC especially has been at the forefront with the introduction of the Radio I Player which The Archers can be accessed on. Radio 4 has maintained its position as the UK's flagship spoken word station. Radio is regulated by OFCOM. There are two type of radio - commercial (has adverts) and Public Service (govt money, licence fee), not for profit, to benefit people and this is BBC Radio 4. BBC remit - education, inform and entertain. There is a tight production schedule that includes biannual meeting (pre-production) monthly recording session that last for 6 day (production) and the shows go to air 3-6 weeks after recording (post-production/ distribution)	