

Severance

Season 1, Episode 1: Good News about Hell

1) Make notes on Lacey's repertoire of elements as you watch the episode.

Element	Conventions
Setting (<i>mise en scene/locations</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lumon industries <p>The primary location is the sterile, corporate environment of Lumon Industries, where the severed employees work. The office spaces are cold, minimalist, and labyrinthine, with endless white hallways, fluorescent lighting, and a lack of windows. This creates a sense of isolation and disorientation, emphasizing the characters' detachment from the outside world.</p> <p>The elevator is an entrance to the company – it is a symbol of the severance procedure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Marks house <p>His house is a contrast of the Lumon office since it is more lived in and personal, however the muted color of the furniture still shows a sense of emptiness and grief which reflects marks emotional self after the loss of his wife.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The break room <p>It is a small and confined space where the Lumon employees are sent for “disciplinary” purposes – there are no windows which highlights the theme of control and manipulation in the show.</p>
Characters (<i>representations, stereotypes, behavior, body language, specific actors/stars</i>) Consider Props character types.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mark <p>He's the main character – he is seen as a reserved and emotionally detached man who is struggling with grief and moral implications of doing the severance procedure. (While at work when he has no memories, he is seen to be a confident man and engaging in a lot of talk with the other employees whilst afterwork he is more antisocial often seen to be rotting in his house until his sister took him to a dinner.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Helly <p>She is the new hire of Lumon, she shows curiosity and rebellious energy representing the audience's perspective. At first, she is resistant to the company, seen when she hit Mark with the speaker however after she have calmed down and is showed the video clip of her consenting to the severance procedure, she showed signs of acceptance but also a hint of curiosity making her a sharp contrast to the other employees.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ms. Cobel <p>A commanding and authoritarian figure who controls the severed employees – there isn't much shown about her in episode one creating a mysterious atmosphere furthermore the control she shows is kind of like a cult leader.</p>
Narrative events (<i>how is the narrative ordered and structured? Is it elliptical?</i>)	<p>The episode uses a non-linear, elliptical structure that alternates between Mark's "innie" (work self) and "outie" (outside self), creating a sense of disorientation.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Opening scene (Helly's arrival) 2. Marks outie life 3. Marks innie life at Lumons 4. Helly's orientation 5. The break room 6. Marks emotional breakdown 7. Cliff hanger ending

<p>Iconography (well known or recognizable people/objects/buildings/mise en scene/props/costume, setting, symbolic codes)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The setting <p>The episode is mainly set in the Lumons office with a lot of white hallways without any windows as well as bright lighting creating a feeling of Lumons is isolated from the rest of the world which can symbolize the employee's detachment from their outie life.</p> <p>The Elevator acts as a gateway for both their Innie and outie life which can symbolize the spiting of your identity</p> <p>The breakroom is a small room with some office equipment where employees are physiologically manipulated which symbolizes the effect of a company control and the manipulation used to maintain order on its employees.</p> <p>Marks home has a muted color scheme along with personal belongings giving a closed off vibe which can represent Mark's struggles with himself and the life he is trying to escape</p>
<p>Style (technical and audio codes e.g. camera use, editing, sound, lighting, color)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Camera use <p>Tracking shots – Follow characters in the hallway</p> <p>Close up shots - especially when characters are going through something emotional</p> <p>Low angle – used to make the boss look more scary</p> <p>Wide shots – used to show the lumons office</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Editing <p>The editing is slow making scenes seem longer adding tension to the episode, the editing also frequently cuts between Mark's innie and outie life</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Light <p>The lighting in the Lumons office is very bright, almost like a hospital, this can contrast with Mark's home as the lighting there is softer and warmer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Color <p>Lumons office: White and grey</p> <p>Mark's home: Earthy tones like dark brown and green.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sound <p>In scenes that is set in the office you can hear a soft mechanical hum which is a ambient sound, there is a lot of moments of silence in the episode to create tension – Diegetic sounds like clicking of keyboards or the beeping of the elevator can be heard</p>

2) Make notes on the following Macro elements as you watch.

<p>Story Arcs within the episode: <i>make note of which are resolved by the end of the episode, and which will continue into the season.</i></p>	<p>1. Helly's arrival</p> <p>She wakes up confused on the Lumons conference table and undergoes a orientation process – later in the episode she accepts her role in the Lumons office but still attempt to escape</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Marks opposite Lifes <p>The episode contrasts between Mark's innie life and outie life, revealing his grief for his wife and his reason for going under the procedure, the episode ends with Mark's outie self-breaking down in the car</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ms. Cobel <p>She watches Mark closely and shows up as his house under disguise which makes the audience question her motifs</p>
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<p>Todorov's Narrative Theory: <i>In what ways does his theory apply (or not apply) to this episode.</i></p>	<p>Severance Episode 1 both engages with and subverts Todorov's narrative theory, using its five-stage structure to create tension while deliberately denying resolution. While the episode loosely follows Todorov's model with Helly's disorientation, her rebellion, and failed escape, it rejects a traditional narrative arc, reflecting the show's dystopian themes. There is no true equilibrium at the start, as the characters already exist within Lumon's cruel system, and the "disruption" is ongoing rather than a single event. Recognition is fragmented Mark's "innie" and "outie" selves remain unaware of each other's struggles, and Lumon actively suppresses defiance from its employees. Furthermore, there is no new equilibrium by the episode's end, instead, the lack of resolution mirrors the character's entrapment</p>
<p>Binary Oppositions: <i>list and explain the oppositions present in the episode. How is this adding to narrative conflict?</i></p>	<p>Work vs Personal life – the Lumon's office can clash with Mark's grief-filled home which highlights the unethical split between the innie and outie life Control vs Rebellion – Lumon's rules such as the surveillance and break room punishments can contrast with Helly's resistance to it, giving the audience an insight of what the story is mainly going to be about Life vs Death – Mark's outie mourns over his dead wife while his innie self is unaware of it which can act as a metaphor of memory loss = death</p>
<p>Themes: <i>What themes can you identify in the episode and how are these being portrayed so far?</i></p>	<p>Identity – portrayed in the Severance procedure by physically splitting the consciousness of your innie life and outie life with no memory from either Corporate control: The Lumon's industry operates like a cult, enforcing compliance through surveillance, psychological torture, and trivial rewards. Rebellion Which can be seen through Helly's actions Grief Mark's severance is a metaphor for dissociation; he literally erases his grief during work hours.</p>