

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"> - In class we watched episode one , season one of the apple TV show 'severance' this show is classified as a thriller and follow the main character mark, the eerie atmosphere can be seen in the setting Lumon Industries is a bright illuminated, empty workplace with long white hallways and a small offices in a large open space. The elevator is important because it separates work and personal life, implicating that the elevator is like a time traveling machine. Other rooms, like the break room and conference room, feel cold, formal and very controlling. - Outside of work, Mark's house in Kier is simple and nothing out of the ordinary unlike his work, showing his loneliness within a very "copy and pasted world". A short scene at a restaurant with his sister Devon feels more normal but still distant which helps to create an unsettling feeling. The outside of Lumon is a huge, windowless building with an empty parking lot, making it feel mysterious and making the building feel powerful and in charge. These places help set the show's eerie and mysterious tone.
Characters (<i>representations, stereotypes, behavior, body language, specific actors/stars</i>) Consider Propps character types.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mark Scout (Hero) – Mark is the main character, but he is lost and confused. He does not start as a typical brave hero he is rather timid and uncanny. - Lumon Industries (Villain) – The company is the real enemy, controlling workers' minds. Harmony Cobel, Mark's boss, is a perfect example of this as control. - Petey (Donor) – Petey gives Mark important information about the truth behind Lumon, Petey is like an angel helping Mark. - Harmony Cobel (Dispatcher) – She guides Mark's severed self at work, though her true motives are unclear due to how she undeniably smart and has motives that have not yet been surfaced. - Lumon's Ideology (False Hero) – The company pretends severance is good, but it is really a kind of prison due to the mind control the company has over the employees. - Truth/Freedom (Princess) – Instead of a person, the "prize" in the story is Mark's search for the truth which at the beginning of the season he doesn't seem to be delving into as much.
Narrative events (<i>how is the narrative ordered and structured? Is it elliptical?</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Non-linear opening – The episode starts with Helly waking up in the conference room, confused, before introducing Mark. This creates a confusing atmosphere which ultimately leads to the uncertainty within the opening scene therefore setting up the tone for the rest of the film. - Two separate lives – The story switches between Mark's work life and personal life (inny and an outty life), showing the contrast between them and their alternative motives. - Elliptical storytelling – Some details are left out, making the audience piece things together, like why Mark chose severance even though the audience can make out that he is going through a mid life crisis due to his wife's passing. - Slow revelations – Instead of explaining everything, the episode gives small clues about Lumon's secrets this ensures that the audience keeps entertained and hooked on the show.

Iconography (<i>well known or recognizable people/objects/buildings/mise en scene/props/costume, setting, symbolic codes</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lumon Industries – The massive, windowless building represents secrecy and corporate power. Its eerie design makes it feel cold and inescapable which ultimately create a scary unknown atmosphere. - Elevator – The elevator is a key symbol, marking the split between work and personal life. It represents control and separation. - White Hallways & Minimalist Office – The endless white halls and empty office space create a sense of isolation and loss of individuality especially since they are stuck in the building majority of the day. - Business Attire – Employees wear formal clothing, showing conformity and the lack of personal identity at Lumon since it appears that everyone is just a copy and paste of each other. - Props (Computers & Files) – The outdated computers and cryptic work tasks make the job feel mysterious and disconnected from reality.
Style (<i>technical and audio codes e.g. camera use, editing, sound, lighting, color</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Camera – Slow, still shots and long takes create tension. Wide shots make characters look small where is eye level shots shows emotion and fear. - Editing – Smooth but eerie, with slow transitions that build mystery - Sound – Quiet with minimal music. Sudden sounds, like doors or voices, feel unsettling. - Lighting – Cold and bright at work, dim and warm at home, showing contrast between work life and home life. - Colour – Mostly neutral tones. White halls and desks feel empty, while Mark’s home is dull and lifeless.

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

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>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The opening scene is Mark working at a company called Lumon, where employees have their memories of work and personal lives separated. Mark seems like a quiet, normal guy, but it's clear he's dealing with sadness over his wife's death. - In the middle whilst mark is at work, he follows a strict routine. A new employee, Helly, starts and doesn't like what's going on at Lumon. Mark's past starts to show through, hinting that the severance procedure is affecting him more than he lets on. - The episode ends with Mark continuing his work, while his personal life and grief are locked away. There's more mystery about what Lumon is really doing, and Mark is clearly struggling with his divided life.
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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>1. Equilibrium:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The episode opens with Mark Scout working in a controlled office environment at Lumon Industries, where personal and work lives are strictly separated through the severance procedure. <p>2. Disequilibrium:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tension arises as Mark's personal life is revealed through subtle flashbacks, and new employee Helly questions the system, exposing the unsettling nature of the severance procedure and Lumon's control over its workers. <p>3. New Equilibrium:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The new Equilibrium is undecided as of now
<p>Binary Oppositions: <i>list and explain the oppositions present in the episode. How is this adding to narrative conflict?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work Life vs. Personal Life <p>The Marks personal and professional life are in dramatic contrast to one another. Employees' memories of their jobs and their personal lives are separated by the severance process, resulting in two unique identities. Conflict results from the characters' emotional and physical struggles with losing touch with his own memories. For example, Mark's grief over his wife is difficult for him to completely absorb at work. The main tension of the show is established by this opposition.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Control vs. Freedom <p>The employees of Lumon Industries are under strict control, with their every action monitored and closely controlled, and their memories surgically divided. As characters like Mark and Helly begin to question the system, their desire for freedom clashes with the oppressive control of Lumon, creating a core conflict that drives the narrative.</p>
<p>Themes: <i>What themes can you identify in the episode and how are these being portrayed so far?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identity vs reality- Characters are split between their work and personal lives, making them question who they really are. Control- Lumon Industries controls every aspect of the employees' lives, especially their memories. Freedom- The employees' lack of freedom is shown through the severance procedure, which keeps them trapped in separate realities. Grief- Mark struggles with the death of his wife, but his memories are blocked, preventing him from fully grieving.