

Telling the Truth – Response Sheet

Title: The Computer Wore Menace Shoes

Form: Animated Cartoon

Creator: Matt Groening

Director: Mark Kirkland

Date: December 3rd, 2000

Context & Values:

The Simpsons are an animated cartoon television show that runs on Fox in the USA and Network Ten in Australia.

It is regarded as the ultimate television show for parody and societal comment in the United States.

This particular episode plays mainly on the context of one man, Matt Drudge. Matt Drudge is a journalist in the United States who owns and runs a website called '*The Drudge Files*.' The website is renowned for breaking controversial stories before larger news organisations. Drudge is the ultimate in investigative journalism and provides the model for which Homer's page is based.

Matt Drudge was the first person to break the Bill Clinton, Monica Lewinsky story in the United States.

Concepts or Ideas Conveyed about Telling the Truth:

There are many concepts explored in the show about the nature of truth and the way in which the media portrays these truths.

Possibly the most obvious is Homer's attitude towards hits and news. The aim of Homer's page is to get as many hits as possible. When Homer's identity as Mr X is revealed, no-one trusts him anymore and so he begins making up news. When Nelson offers him some real news, he replies "real news is great, but I'm getting a thousand hits an hour with grade-A ballplop."

This quote also shows the relationship between hits and news. The point of any news organisation is to gain ratings, in internet language, that translates to hits, or the number of people who visit a certain page.

The episode also looks at the nature of double standards in media. The local news station in Springfield, Channel 6, tries their own smear campaign against Mr X but is guilty of the same double standards. The following is broadcast on air by anchorman, Kent Brockman.

Kent: A local internet watchdog, Mr X, if that is his real name, has come up with a sensational scoop.

Homer: Darn tooting

Kent: But we must never forget that the real news is here, delivered by respectable newsmen like me, Kent Brockman. Coming up, how do they get those dogs to talk on the beer commercials? Cowboy Steve will tell you.

There is also the concept of compromising news with advertising. On the Springfield Police website, a box appears asking whether you have committed a

crime. When Homer clicks 'No', the message replies with "You have clicked 'No', meaning you have committed a crime but don't want to confess, a paddy wagon is now speeding to your home." Following this, a new message appears encouraging the user to buy Springfield Police merchandise while you wait. It states that "you have the right to remain fabulous."

The episode also touches on the idea of cover-ups, as the secret organisation removes people from society who know too much.

Another issue is that making news is news. On the front page of the Springfield Shopper, the headline reads "Web Snoop Exposes Pool Hustle." A little further down the page, another headline reads "Mr X Makes Headlines."

Language/filmic/visual/aural features:

- Irony – Homer buys his computer from a place that is a converted auto mechanics workshop. The shop is called "Honest John's Computers." In reality, the salesman is extremely deceitful. When Homer asks whether the computer he is about to buy "is the best computer in the world and always will be?" the salesman replies with "Absolutely."
- Humour – Humour is used throughout the show to keep the audience interested. "There's no emoticon for what I'm feeling."
- Parody – The title of the episode, '*The Computer Wore Menace Shoes*' is a parody of the 1969 film '*The Computer Wore Tennis Shoes*' with a loosely related plot.
- Intertextuality – Intertextuality is very common on '*The Simpsons*.' Homer is taken to 'The Island' after he supposedly stumbles across a secret plan. 'The Island' is an intertextuality link from the TV series '*The Prisoner*.' Patrick McGoohan was the star character, number 6, in that show and he guest stars in this episode. The line used by Homer when asked what number he is, is also a piece of intertextuality. He replies "I am not a number, I am a man!" This parody's McGoohan's famous line from '*The Prisoner*.'
- Alliteration – "Sensational Scoop"
- Over-Dramatisation – Mr Burns states to Smithers, "are you ready for the secret meeting." It is also described as "journalistic dynamite" and when Homer is watching the meeting from an air vent he states "I love spying." The show continually uses their creative licence to interest viewers.

Describe the issues being twisted:

There are two types in this episode. The first type is the ones that are true that are attempted to be covered up. These include Mayor Quimby's secret pool, Apu's Bagels, Police Racing Criminals, Police using electric chair to cook chicken, Miss Springfield using appearance altering cosmetics and Mr Burns selling uranium to terrorists.

Then there are the ones Homer makes up, including Spanish and Italian are the same language, a new race is living under Denver and that authorities are controlling people's mind with flu shots.