

Analysis of 'The Simpsons' title sequence

'The Simpson's' is an animated television series showing adventures of the Simpson family. In particular it focuses on Bart Simpson, the family's 10 year old son. The show is enjoyed by a wide audience, from children to adults. One of the most recognizable aspects of the cartoon is its title sequence which is, in it self a short cartoon.

The beginning and ending of the title sequence are quite different and give you two different impressions of the program. It starts of with heavenly angelic music and with a camera shot of a blue sky and white fluffy clouds. From this you would expect a little child's program that is happy. On this section of the sequence the title also appears from amongst clouds and then the camera zooms in onto the title and through the letters to see an aerial view of Springfield. By the end of the sequence you probably no longer think that it is about a heavenly family more likely a hellish family. It always ends with the Simpson's family coming home and running chaotically onto the sofa.

Throughout the sequence the soundtrack is provided by a jazzy orchestra and although it changes slightly for different scenes it is much the same. There is an upbeat tempo which reflects the action of the title sequence. In different sections of the sequence emphasizes is on different instruments that are being played which reflects what is going on. Part way into the sequence you can recognize a saxophone solo played by Lisa, which as well as adding to the comic element it also gives you an insight to her personality. At the beginning you can identify a harp being played which helps the heavenly effect comer through.

The title sequence zooms about around Springfield and shows you that it is stereo - typical town of America. During the title sequence the camera shows a variety of long and short shots and swoops about and shows you all the main places where the cartoon takes place including the Simpson's house, Bart and Lisa's school and the power plant where Homer works. The effect of doing this is it helps to set the scene and get a bearing of Springfield.

The whole title sequence is based around following the Simpson's family going home from their daily activities. Homer goes home in his car from work; Bart rides his skateboard home after a detention at school; Lisa rides her bike home from a band after school and Marge drives Maggie and her home after going to the supermarket. By showing you what they do during the day you can get a better idea of what their personality is like. The title sequence is similar to other

cartoons in the way it has funny music and a style like many other animated television shows. However, the cartoon involves a whole family instead on just one or two main characters.

Every episode some aspects of the sequence change slightly and every series there are more changes. One of the things that changes every show is what Bart is writing on the blackboard in detention. The effect of making this change is that it adds to the humour and makes regular viewers have a reason to want to watch it. Another change that happens every episode is how the Simpson family sits on the sofa at the end of the title sequence. Sometimes they dance before sitting on the sofa together but other times the sofa may turn into a bed or fall through the floor. Lisa's saxophone changes every series to a different tune but they are all quite similar. Occasionally there are special episodes which make the whole title sequence change altogether. These are often to do with Halloween and instead of the heavenly beginning, Marge says a speech warning new viewers of what is coming.

From the title sequence we see that Springfield is a busy environment and its inhabitants are a bit abnormal. During the sequence we are shown a variety of aspects of Springfield and we can get a good understanding of what Springfield's environment is like. We are helped to set the scene and get this understanding by being shown the places we see in most episodes. We see all of the inhabitants of Springfield somewhere in the title sequence whether they are shopping or just standing on the streets. However all the characters are doing something we associate with them. Some of them are just pulling faces, so we can guess what they are thinking, but others are playing in a band or at work. For example we link Bart with a naughty and cheeky boy and in the title sequence you can tell that he has been this way when you see him writing lines on the blackboard in detention.

Overall, I think the title sequence is very effective and has been well thought out. The music is very lively and fits in with the short cartoon very well, it keeps it moving and helps it flow from one part to another. If you didn't have this music in the background the title sequence would not be as funny or as good. There is also a great contrast between the beginning and the end of the title sequence so if you were a first time viewer you would maybe find this quite humorous and even some regular viewers like this contrast. By showing you this title sequence you can see that this cartoon is different to others by involving a whole family and that is going to be a amusing show you are about to watch. The title sequence is also very recognizable and helps to promote the show.

By Hannah Boaler