

I think that anyone who saw the first ever episode of *Black Mirror*, “The National Anthem”, can agree that it was difficult to watch. Above anything else, I believe that both the subject matter in terms of bestiality and the media involvement surrounding the whole incident made the episode most uncomfortable for the viewers. In the episode, the Prime Minister of England is faced with the dilemma of either having sex with a pig on live television or letting the princess of the country die. Just thinking about this makes anyone squirm, especially because as viewers we tend to put ourselves in the main character’s shoes. I found me asking myself constantly “what would I do in this scenario?,” and just the thought of having to choose between having blood on my hands and no guaranteed safety for myself and my family versus doing a despicable, gruesome sexual act for the whole world to see was scary. The creator of the series, Charlie Brooker, said in the video we watched in class that sometimes he realizes after he finishes drawing out an idea for an episode that it actually doesn’t seem too far-fetched from actual reality, and I think that this sense of too close for comfort added to the comfortability viewers felt while watching it. In my eyes, the role the media played in this episode with the polls of how the public felt and the live broadcast really added to this sense of realness. We all know how fast a story like this would spread especially in this day and age with the technology we all have access too, and the worst part is, is that we all also know how addicted we would all be to it and obsessed with the possible outcomes.

There were several intended messages that I believe this episode worked to try and send out to the audience. One message that I identified was communicated very clearly at the end of the episode and was simply that people love to watch dramatic situations unfold, regardless of how gruesome or traumatic they are. It was said in the episode that over a billion people across the world tuned in to watch the Prime Minister complete the sexual act, and even though this takes place in a fabricated universe, these numbers were alarming. No one could take their eyes off their screen, so much so that the perpetrator behind it all even released the princess thirty minutes early into the streets just because he knew no one would be searching for her. We as humans are obsessed with drama, and are honestly ruthless when it comes to regarding people’s feelings and lives if that’s gets in the way of it. Another message that was communicated in the episode was the power that the internet gives one to upload anything they want. This was seen with the original video of the princess reading the demands being posted on YouTube, and when this was taken down because the British government wanted it secret, re-uploaded by clone accounts and sent out to mass news stations. No organization has the power to block uploads immediately, no matter how traumatic they are, especially when they come from unknown accounts, and this scary reality was exposed effectively throughout the episode. The final message that the episode was trying to communicate was the power of mass media. I felt like this message might be the most important, as it relates to both the first and second message, but also covers more of the whole situation. Mass media was the fuel to the fire in this scenario. It gave the situation a platform, and allowed it to spread like a wildfire to people across the world. Mass media can be used for both good or for bad, but without question will be used to spread information to the masses, and this episode showed just how fast and effectively this can occur.

In my opinion, the scene that is worthy of class analysis is the scene where the prime minister’s closest female advisor gets the call where it’s revealed that the whole thing was a hoax of sorts as the princess was let out thirty minutes before the sexual act occurred, and it wasn’t

even her finger that was cut off. I think that this scene needs a class discussion because the episode didn't really give it any time. The information was ordered to be dismissed and kept out of any reports released to the public, and no one other than those two characters discussed it. I would like to see what my classmates thought about this scene, and how they think the prime minister would have reacted if he found out this was the case. I personally believe that he might have not been able to live with himself anymore, but it might have been more interesting if he tried to play it off to save face. In any case, I think that more discussion needs to be given to this scene as it was a pivotal moment in my mind, and perfect for a variety of interpretations.