

High Merit – Breaking Bad

Episode 6 of the television series, “Breaking Bad”, created by Vince Gilligan, begins with the use of manipulation of time. The fracturing of time in this episode is shown through a flash-forward. A flash-forward is a future event being inserted into the present storyline to hint towards future happenings. [1]

In episode 6, Walter White, back in business with Jesse Pinkman, begins telling Jess how things will be from now on. He tells him that he wants to be the “silent partner” in their operation and that his “realm” is only the chemistry and “out there on the street, you deal with that”. Walt also states that “no matter what happens, no more bloodshed, no violence.” [2] Time is manipulated when this scene is intercut with shots of a bald man ominously walking through a group of shady looking people on a street littered with smoking debris, and various car alarms blaring. He is also holding a white bag with a blood stain on it, exiting what appears to be an extremely ‘violent’ situation. As the shot pans up and his face is revealed, we see that this bald man is actually Walt and we are in a flash-forward. [1] Vince Gilligan’s purpose in using a flash forward was to interest the viewers and also give incentive to the audience to continue watching the series. [3] The audience wants to find out how a character such as Walt, who has had honest intentions from the beginning of the series, goes from a normal family-orientated individual to a ruthless looking thug. It’s the huge contrast, between the different snippets of the timelines that create this interest. Up until this point in the season, Walt has had a distinctive family man look. In the flash-forwards, he is no longer normally dressed, but we are shown a far more threatening depiction of the man. His head is shaved, his face is bloody; he’s dressed in all black, with his overall image explicitly implying villainy. The shots in the flash-forward [e.g. low angle shots and slightly silhouetted] also show Walt in a powerful light, [2] it begins to suggest the result of Walt becoming a meth kingpin [Heisenburg] later on in the series. [3] The audience is now intrigued, to find out how much Walt will continue to change.

This sharp visual contrast foreshadows the division in Walt’s personality we see later on in the series. This contradicting image, affects the audience by giving us a sense of dramatic irony, through the dialogue, conflicting with what we are shown. The audience knows that his version of Walt will occur, and throughout the episode the episode, wait in anticipation for this change to occur. [4] [5] Because it shows how Walt will directly defy his previous moral ground, it shows us of how Walt will descend further into the criminal lifestyle despite his originally wholesome intentions. It further highlights the change Walt has undergone and will undergo in just one season. [6]