

BROOKLYN NINE-NINE, SEASON 1, EPISODE 1: PILOT

Brooklyn Nine-Nine is a comedy TV series featuring the staff at the 99th Precinct of the New York Police Department (NYPD), located in the neighborhood Brooklyn. It is a situation comedy (sitcom) in which character relationships and interactions play a much larger role than police work, although the episode we will watch is balanced between office interactions and police work. The cast is racially diverse, including white, Black, Latinx, LGBTQ, and non-neurotypical characters.

The series' cancelation was announced in 2021 after the Black Lives Matter protests in the United States, amid discussions of "copaganda"¹ aimed at dismissing the reality of how police in America are for many minority communities represent discrimination, oppression, and injustice. The writing team questioned the ethics of making a comedy show about police in the wake of a police officer murdering African-American civilian George Floyd (with the aid of other officers), as well as a long history of racist murders by police officers that have gone unpunished.

PART 1. OPENER: DISCUSSION QUESTION

Has a comedy show about police officers ever been made in South Korea? What themes would you expect it to deal with, if one was?

PART 2. VOCABULARY

Segment 1:

- "This job is eating me alive."
- "the man in the white hat"
- "'sup?"
- "Get it together."
- "sleeve tats"
- "an informant on the inside"
- undercover
- "in many moons"

Segment 2:

- "crack the case"
- deduced
- C.O.
- scalpers
- a pretty big swing
- "She's into ____."
- washed-up pencil-pusher
- rule-following robot
- "gay vibe"

- "lost my edge"
- "hard-to-read" [for a person]
- "a grinder"
- "their numbers have gone way up"
- therapy sessions

Segment 3:

- perp
- lay off
- rabbi
- constipated
- "what ____ is up to"
- "ear to the ground"
- "let the ____ begin"
- "hot eligible bachelor"
- struck out with / hooked up with
- manscaping

Segment 4:

- "and scene"
- "a waste of Manchego"

Segment 5:

- "the real deal"
- "on the bench"
- "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em."
- "Give him a hand."

Segment 6:

- pumped to be ____
- stakeout
- "white noise machine"
- "with all due respect"
- "this is awkward"
- "openly gay"
- "couldn't wait to ____."
- jackass
- "I just got the ____ thing."
- "Nailed it!"
- speedo

¹ Propaganda portraying the police in an unrealistically positive way.

PART 3. QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What do you prefer: a serious police procedural², or a comedy cop show like *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*? Why?
2. Even police officers online disagree about how realistic or unrealistic *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* is regarding police work. Do you think realism matters in a show like this? Why or why not?
3. Like many American shows, *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* is self-consciously diverse and inclusive. In reality, the average police officer in the USA is 39 years old and a white male.³ Critics think that the show is unrealistic in its attempt to be inclusive, and only serves as distorted “copaganda”; fans argue that the show models diversity for positive reasons and should be applauded. What do you think?
4. In many American TV series—and not just comedies—work is the focus of the show. Police shows, crime shows, business dramas and more explore characters’ home lives only in a limited way, focusing mostly on their workplace tasks and relationships. Do you see any ways in which workplaces and work are depicted differently in many Korean TV series from what you see in American shows like *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*? What’s similar, and what is different, about the way each culture depicts work?
5. Comedy and comedic writing tend to be very different in different languages and cultures. How would you summarize the difference between how comedy works in Korean sitcoms, versus how it works in American ones like *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*?

PART 4. FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

Think of a workplace that you have never seen depicted in a Korean TV show. Imagine you’ve been tasked with developing a series concept. The only guideline is that it cannot be a mainstream or romantic drama. (Sci-fi, fantasy, mystery, sitcom, crime drama, or any other genre is okay.) However, the work must play a role in the series: the workplace cannot just be an interchangeable setting!

- What workplace would you choose to depict?
- What genre or genres would you use or combine in the series?
- Who would the four main characters in this imagined series?
- What themes would you explore in the show?

² i.e. A serious, realistic police drama.

³ According to Zippia.com, 60% of US police officers are white; 18.2% are Latinx or Hispanic; 12.9% are Black; 4.6% are of unknown ethnicity. 83.2% are male, with only 16.8% female. Only 7% of US police officers are (openly) LGBTQ. (<https://www.zippia.com/police-officer-jobs/demographics/>) Additionally, 11% of police chiefs are LGBTQ, but only 9.9% are Black. (<https://www.zippia.com/chief-of-police-jobs/demographics/>) Although Zippia’s reliability is questionable, the racial data seems to be confirmed by research conducted by the Pew Research Center (<https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2017/01/11/inside-americas-police-departments/>).