Say Yes to the Dress opens with quick shots of brides-to-be, brides who are overwhelmingly happy, kissing, hugging, and crying tears of joy. The viewers instantly feel connected to the brides who are soon to air on the show. The camera then breaks to a screen that has the title of the show and a shot of Kleinfeld’s (the store in which the show is filmed). To avid watchers, and many brides or want-to-be brides, the simple shot of that front window expresses a wedding world that only many can dream of. The consultant room is the next image on the screen as we hear them discussing their ‘plan of action’ and what their guest brides are looking for. By doing this, the audience is placed in the shoes of the consultants and can understand what they will be looking for throughout the show. After the viewers are given a quick glance at the name of the store once more, the brides of the show are finally introduced. Audiences hear a quick overview of the bride’s name, age, hometown, and how they met the love of their life. Many times this opening is accompanied with a sob story or an “awe” moment in which the audience can gather their feelings and pretend they are close friends with the bride…if not wishing to be the bride. One by one the brides meet their consultants, introduce the people they brought with them, and start picking dresses. It’s not long before the next bride is introduced in a similar manner. Can the anxious brides find the dress of their dreams during their 45-minute appointment? The brides move to putting on dress after dress; some a perfect fit, and others, not so much. These trial and error techniques used by the consultants are all in hopes of a bride’s overjoyed ‘YES!’ to the perfect dress for her.

Bitter brides, happy brides, angry brides; this show feeds off the reactions and personalities of the brides-to-be. The repetitions of similar introductions give the audience something to grasp onto, knowing they will soon meet the lucky brides to appear on the show.
However, the unique stories that come out of these introductions are what the audience anxiously awaits; it’s what makes the bride come alive. The attitudes portrayed by the brides often contrast one another on a single episode so that although one bride may be emotional over the loss of her mother to cancer, another bride can be overjoyed finding the perfect dress, whereas yet another…person…who is not yet ‘officially engaged’ is determined that her boyfriend will soon propose to her thus justifying her need for a wedding dress. The atypical twists and turns of each person’s background makes the show worth watching. There will always be the fairytale wedding without a single problem, but every once in a while a crazy person who isn’t even engaged yet will be ready to drop $10,000 on a wedding dress without seeing a problem. These anomalies allow the viewer to stay engaged, since normally one would assume that any person who is on a show about buying a wedding dress would naturally be doing just that, buying a wedding dress, for their wedding.

As brides try on dress after dress excited to have found ‘the one’ or angry that not a single one ‘is them’ the consultants have a field day making comments to one another on the ‘girl who will never be happy’ or ‘the girl who has an over opinionated mother and is now in tears’. Often times these remarks create a drama out of the show so that viewers are not only dreaming of what they see as a perfect wedding (for them or in general) but also constantly reminding themselves how happy they are ‘that the family on TV isn’t their family’. The implicit meaning in Say Yes to the Dress is that every girl can have their dream wedding with the perfect dress. This flawed notion is obviously shown through the clips at the end of the show of the brides wearing their dresses and having a great time at their wedding, or kissing after just having tied the knot. Happily ever after is what the show aims to close with in hopes that viewers get that full of love feeling that makes them come back for more.
This TLC hit show focuses on women of all ages by providing the illusion that getting married means being treated like a queen. Marriage is the key: young girls dream of it, middle-aged women want it, and elderly women look back on it with fond memories, or regret. Say Yes to the Dress gives a flawed view that a wedding dress is what creates the perfect wedding. Brides drop thousands of dollars on a dress they will most likely wear one night, and yet this show says that if they hadn’t bought this dress, their wedding would not have been as glamorous as it was. The bride’s magical day is complete all because they were able to shop at Kleinfeld’s and find the dress of their dreams. The importance of love, devotion, and people to share the experience with is set aside in this show, while the reality that a wedding dress is simply a minor detail in a wedding is entirely overlooked. In all, Say Yes to the Dress’s ability to mix drama with the awe factor leaves viewers craving affection and looking for more love to come in future episodes.