

Types of representation

Representation is the construction of aspects of identity and reality in the media, such as gender, social groups, ethnicity, places and age. Audiences make assumptions about these aspects based on the representations they see.

Gender

Masculinity and femininity are culturally determined behaviours associated with being male or female. Male characteristics are often portrayed as better than female ones, and women are often sexualised, but these assumptions are often challenged.

Social groups

Class depictions focus on power and hierarchy. The media often encourage the audience to aspire to a wealthy, upper- or middle-class lifestyle by working hard, ignoring the causes of poverty and inequality. Social groups may also cover people with a common interest or situation, such as fathers, unemployed people, cyclists.

Types of representation

Age

Age-related stereotypes are common, whether young or old. For example, teenagers are often depicted as thoughtless and antisocial, and elderly people as vulnerable victims. The age of models or actors in advertising and music videos often reflects that of the target audience.

Ethnicity

Our understanding of other ethnicities is often formed by the media. Although overt racism is rare in mainstream media, non-white people remain under-represented and stereotypes and negative portrayals are common.

Places

Locations may be represented as dangerous (e.g. a war zone or the back streets of a town at night) or welcoming (e.g. a middle-class family home or a sandy beach), simplifying the more complicated reality.

How people can be represented

- **What they look like:** Ethnicity, dress, age, attractiveness, visible disabilities
- **How they sound:** Accent, choice of words, use of language, volume of speech, speed of dialogue
- **How they behave:** Naturally, predictably, empathetically – or not
- **Using visual effects:** Camera angles, length of shots, editing, lighting

Analysing media representations

Ask yourself these questions:

- ✓ What is being represented?
- ✓ How is it represented?
- ✓ What sense of the world is it making?
- ✓ What does it imply?
- ✓ Is it made to seem typical of the world or 'unnatural'?
- ✓ Is anything missing or put in the background?
- ✓ Who produced it?
- ✓ Who is it speaking to? For whom?
- ✓ What does it represent to us and why?
- ✓ How do we respond to the representation?
- ✓ How is it different from other representations?

Now try this

Mothers are a social group that is often portrayed in advertisements as young, healthy, happy and fulfilled. How far does this representation reflect real life? Why are mothers represented like this? Can you find any adverts that portray mothers differently? Why do you think these adverts have taken this approach?



Constructing representations: film and TV

Film and TV (moving image products) are the media that provide the most vivid or in-depth representations. However, as with all media products, the creators have made choices about what to include, and how to present it, so that even non-fiction films and TV programmes (such as documentaries, news reports and interviews) show a particular version of the world.

How do moving image media construct representations?

Portrayal of people (see pages 1, 7 and 8)

such as stereotyping, gender, class, ethnicity, attractiveness, behaviour, speech, body language

Portrayal of places

such as internal/external, locations, positive/negative

Ideas (see page 35)

such as reinforcing or questioning dominant ideology

Sound (see pages 23 and 26)

such as music, sound effects, dialogue

Everything in film and TV media products has been selected

Editing (see page 21)

such as narrative sequencing, image editing techniques and transitions, visual effects

Script

such as how people interact, what they say

Cameras (see pages 15–17)

such as framing, camera angles, camera movement

Lighting (see pages 18–20)

such as high/low key, colour filters, direction, shadows

Design (see page 27)

such as *mise-en-scène*, costume, props, colour

The effect of context

Where you watch the film or show influences your attitude and ability to receive its messages.

Where you watch	How this influences your attitude and ability to receive messages
In the cinema	You have made the effort to go to see the film so want it to be worthwhile.
Online, e.g. on YouTube	You may have received a clip that somebody else enjoyed, or you may have searched for a particular clip.
On your phone	You may watch a clip on the move, on a screen too small to show a lot of detail.
On TV at home	Whether or not you have chosen to see what is on TV, you are in a comfortable, private environment.
On public screens, e.g. in a café or station	You cannot choose the content – it is playing automatically whether you want to see it or not.

Now try this

Explain how where you receive the content of the film or TV show might influence the way you react to it.

If you have paid to see a film, are you more likely to try to enjoy it than if you are watching a TV clip on YouTube?

Constructing representations: advertising

Advertisements are a type of text that can be read for meaning like a book or website. They are intended to persuade you (or the target audience) to do something – to buy a product or service, to change your behaviour, or to be informed about something.

Advertising is everywhere



Conventions of visual adverts

- Brand logo and colour scheme
- Slogan
- Aim to be striking or memorable
- More emphasis on images than words
- Reliance on symbols and stereotypes

Crossover of TV adverts with film and TV

- ✓ TV adverts often use conventions of film/TV, compressed in a shorter time frame.
- ✓ They use *mise-en-scène* (see page 27), costume, lighting, sound, camera angles and editing.
- ✓ They may have a plot, characters and resolution.
- ✓ The brand or product may not be clear until the end, enabling the audience to watch the advert as entertainment.
- ✓ They may be part of a series, building up familiarity over time.



Magazine adverts, like this one for Lacoste, are aimed at a particular target audience who are supposed to identify with what they see. For example, they are encouraged to think that, if they buy that brand of jeans, they can be as attractive or trendy as the model.

How to read an advert

- How do words, images and/or sound work together to communicate a message?
- What is the purpose of this advertisement?
- How does it fulfil this purpose?
- What conventions does it use?
- What opinions does it make you form?
- Are these opinions the same as the ones you think are intended by the advertiser?

Now try this

Think about the last advert you saw, whether on your phone, on TV or while you were walking down the street. Describe how it fulfilled the conventions of advertising and whether you think it was successful.

Constructing representations: games

Computer and video games, and mobile apps, are interactive media, immersing players in the game's world and giving the impression that the players control the outcome.

Social interaction: Some games have in-built social sharing and multiplayer features, making them a shared cultural experience. Players meet online in forums and via social media where players can discuss and modify their gameplay methods and reactions.

Augmented and virtual reality: Superimposing computer-generated sound, video, graphics or GPS data onto a real-world environment blurs the boundaries between 'real' and 'game'.

How games developments might influence representation

Blurring boundaries:

Mobile gaming exposes players to multiple messages in other media (e.g. advertising, internet, video) together offering millions of interpretations. Pervasive games influence the lives of their players, for instance by encouraging them to impose gender-limiting values on women.

Realistic graphics: On all platforms, graphics that closely resemble film add to players' sense of the game's 'reality', increasing engagement and immersion.

Players as developers:

Players can construct their own levels (representations) and some Kickstarter projects enable players to help create the game, taking control over certain representations.

Players as viewers:

Gameplaying can now be easily recorded and shared via channels like Twitch. These videos are watched, removing the interactive element and ability of players to control the gameplay.

Embedded advertising: Mobile apps provide more opportunity for audiences to be exposed to media-controlled representation of brands, encouraging players to see them as desirable.

Representation of audience or creator?

Stereotypical games player:
young, white, heterosexual male

BUT

Many studies show roughly 50% of players are female.

Gaming is popular in countries like South Korea and Japan.

Older people are playing more games, especially on mobile devices.

BUT

Games developers are often young, white, heterosexual males who create the sort of games they like to play.

SO

Almost all lead gaming characters are white males.

Games often reflect and reinforce values of white, male-dominated society.

Propp's Morphology of the Folktale (1968)

- Most stories in Western culture share a **limited** range of narrative and character types.
- **Narrative types:** quest, epic, saga, romance
- **Episode types:** challenges, obstacles, rewards
- **Character types:** hero, false hero, villain, donor, princess, father figure, helper, dispatcher
- Adventure games tend to be **formulaic**, fulfilling these types.
- Players understand and play the game based on **previous experience** of these types.

Cutscenes (cinematics)



Video games often feature non-interactive scenes, shot and edited like a film, to progress the story or introduce new elements of gameplay. Some people think this changes the player into a passive recipient of the game's maker's intended meanings rather than letting the player control their experience.

Now try this

Choose a female character from a computer game. Describe how she is portrayed and explain how this representation fulfils or subverts audience expectations.

Think about what she looks like, how she is dressed and how she behaves in relation to male characters.

Constructing representations: music videos

Now that music can be easily accessed for free, for example via YouTube, music videos need to work harder than ever to persuade viewers to pay for the artist's music or live shows.



Fans may strongly identify with singers and bands that they feel represent them, and videos reinforce this brand image.

Pop: attractive singers and dancers; colourful, sometimes revealing costumes; in studio or familiar setting; dance routines; eye contact with the camera.

Indie/folk: focus on artists' performance; understated costumes; shows band playing instruments; simple, low-budget feel; in countryside, street or warehouse.

Common conventions of music videos

When analysing representations in a music video, consider:

- how the artist is being represented
- how others are represented
- how the song is being promoted
- how the audience is expected to feel about what they see and hear.

Rock: focus on artists; often performance-based focusing on singer; alternative or leather costumes; low-key lighting; on stage or in unusual settings.

R&B: sexualised images, such as topless men; colourful costumes; symbols of wealth such as gold jewellery, cars; at studio, nightclub or house party.

The effect of different music video styles

Style	Description	Effect
Narrative: linear	Video tells a story from start to end (cause and effect) that may or may not be related to the song's lyrics and may or may not feature the artist.	Emotionally engages viewer in the story. Song becomes associated with the story and the feelings it provokes.
Narrative: fragmented	Video tells a story in parts or not in chronological order. May include clips from a film the song is promoting.	Viewer becomes interested in story and wants to find out more, or watch the film.
Performance	The band or singer is shown preparing for and/or performing on stage or in the studio. There may be dancers.	Represents band or singer as an authentic, popular, talented musician. Also suggests that their live shows are worth attending.
Mixed	Narrative video frequently cuts to artist performing song.	By being reminded that the narrative is inspired by the song, viewers are expected to respond to the video as entertainment rather than a representation of reality.
Cameo	Artist features in the narrative but does not perform or participate in the story.	The artist is presented as separate from the music and images.
Animation	Cartoon, stop-motion or computer-generated images are used instead of live action. The artist may not appear.	Video may be more memorable than live-action ones. May showcase latest technology, suggesting artist is cutting edge.

Now try this

Choose an example of each of the styles of video and explain how they follow this style. Then describe how each video fulfils, or does not fulfil, conventions for that type of music.

Constructing representations: magazines

Magazines were traditionally printed weekly, fortnightly or monthly but many popular magazines are now updated more regularly online. However, print is still an important media channel. Magazines cater to readers' interests (e.g. celebrities, fashion) and hobbies (e.g. computers, fishing).

How do magazines construct representations?

Portrayal of people

(see pages 1, 7 and 8)
such as stereotyping, gender, class, ethnicity, attractiveness, behaviour, speech, body language

Portrayal of places such as internal/external, locations, positive/negative

Ideas (see page 35)

such as reinforcing or questioning dominant ideology

Portrayal of readers/ target audience

such as readers' letters, competitions, using their content

**Everything in magazines
has been selected**

Advertising

such as appeal to readers, alignment with content

Photographs and images

(see page 10)
such as content, camera angle, setting, cropping

Content

such as subject matter, tone of voice (authoritative, fun, persuasive)

Design and page layout (see pages 28 and 29)

such as font, hierarchy of type, typography, white space

Page composition

(see page 29)
such as consistency, visual hierarchy

Printed magazines: key points

- Magazines are designed to be dipped in and out of, rather than to be read straight through, so need to catch readers' attention.
- They are disposable – not intended to be kept on a shelf like a book.
- Buying a magazine is buying part of a brand – after you read one or two editions, you know what to expect and whether it appeals to you.
- Advertisements market products as you read.

Content is selected for a purpose

Compare the spider diagram above with the one about film and TV products on page 2. In terms of shaping representations, they have a surprising amount in common. All media have been created by a selective process for a particular reason and audience. For example, a men's fitness magazine might be designed to appeal to active men aged 18–35 with a particular disposable income; all aspects of it are chosen with this in mind, from an aspirational photo of a fit-looking man on the front cover to the types of advertisements.

Now try this

Pick up any magazine and look through it. Describe its target audience.

You will find clues by looking at the front cover image and text, advertisements, type of articles and prizes for any competitions.

Representing

Stuart Hall said that representation is the production of meaning through language – a spoken language like English, or a visual language like photography or TV. This language is formed of signs, which we must agree on and share as a culture to convey and understand a message.

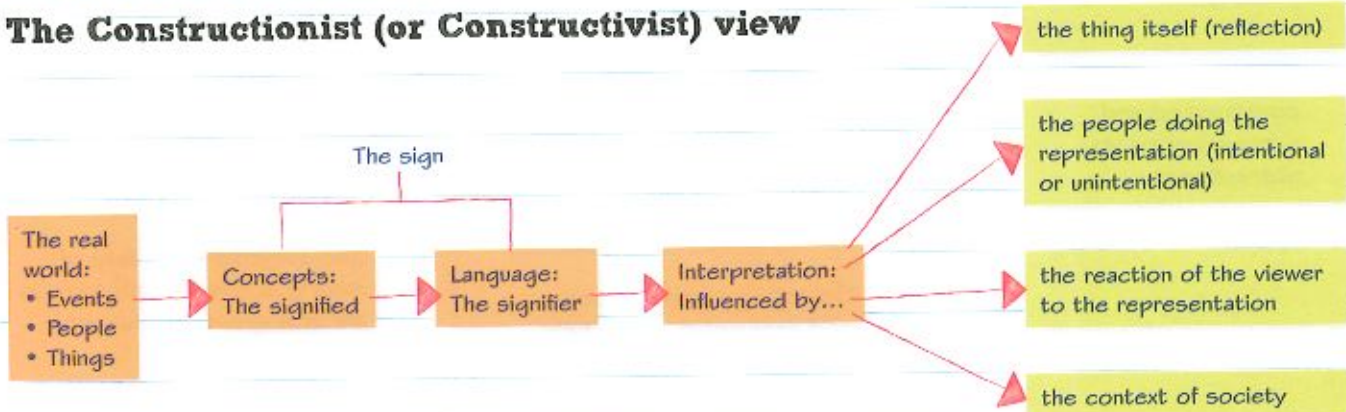
What is truth?

Stuart Hall said that 'Reality exists outside language, but it is constantly mediated by and through language.' Objects, characters and events on screen or in print do not have universal, true meanings but are **mediated** through the perspective of the person making the media. They choose what to show us, so their social and personal biases affect the 'facts', through what is shown and how it is shown. The media present a new reality. We may **decode** the media in the way we're intended to, or in another way.



The Only Way is Essex (TOWIE) is a scripted reality show that features real people in structured scenes. Hall's theory suggests it's no less 'true' than a news report.

The Constructionist (or Constructivist) view



Hall said that some signs create meaning by exploiting 'difference'. What message is conveyed by his example of Dr. Martens boots teamed with a flowing long skirt in a fashion photo?

Questions to ask when analysing media representations

- ✓ What signs are used to convey the message?
- ✓ What 'truth' or 'reality' is represented?
- ✓ What meaning is produced?
- ✓ How is this meaning produced?
- ✓ Are any other meanings possible?
- ✓ Who constructed the representation?
- ✓ Why did they construct the representation?
- ✓ How can the viewer challenge the representation?

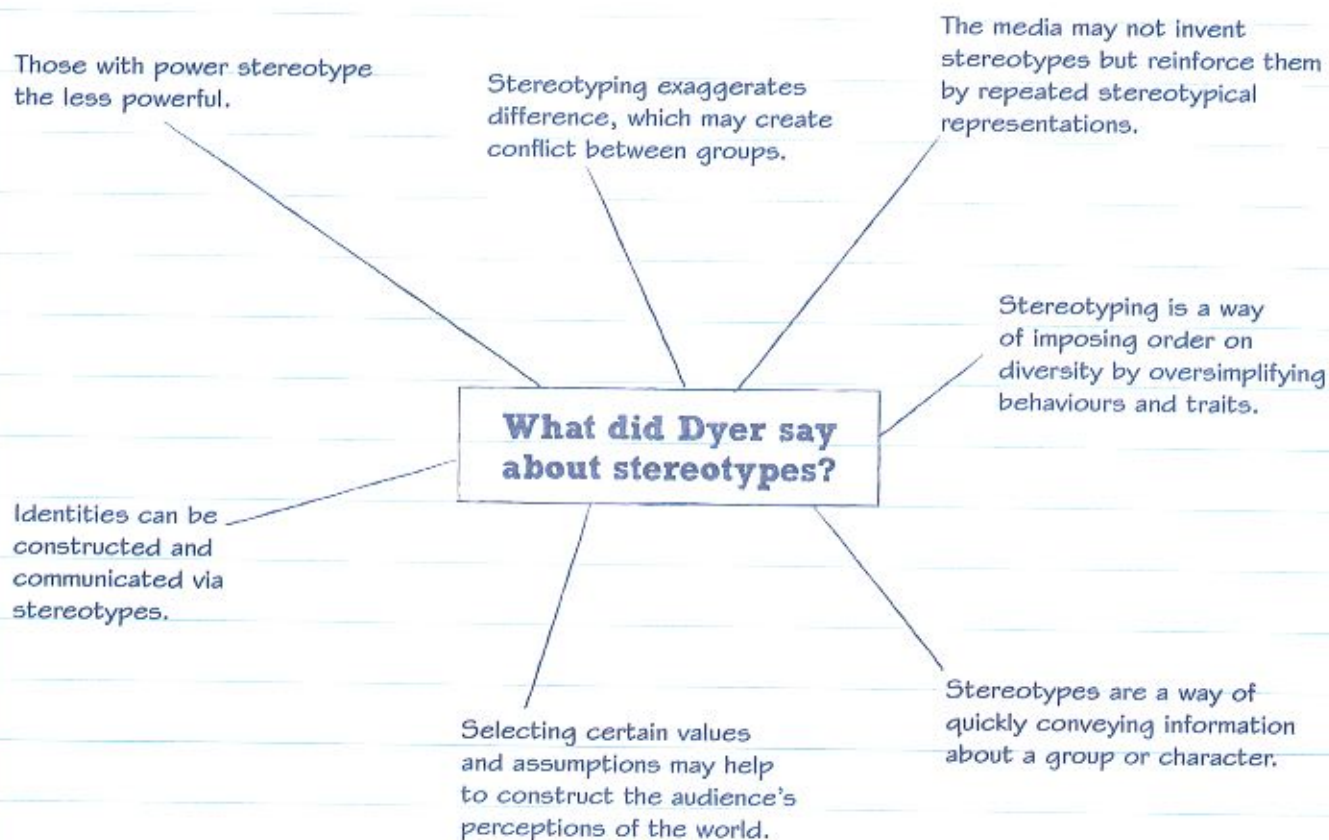
Now try this

Compare the coverage of the same news story in a tabloid newspaper and a broadsheet newspaper. How does the portrayal vary? How is this conveyed through words and images? Does the different treatment affect your opinion of the 'facts'?

Remember that Hall's concept of representation suggests that the media present a different reality.

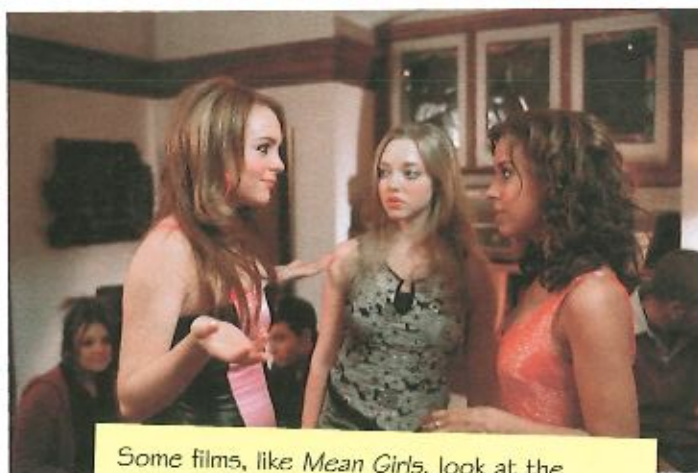
Stereotyping

Richard Dyer's theory focuses on how the complexity and diversity of a group or individual is reduced to a few limited characteristics.



Stereotypes are about power

Media stereotypes of non-white racial groups, women, gay people and working-class people are often easier to identify than stereotypes of white, middle-class, heterosexual men. Stereotypical representations categorise different groups and place them in a **hierarchy**, with the most powerful and dominant at the top.



Some films, like *Mean Girls*, look at the positive and negative effects of stereotypes but may be seen as reinforcing them.

Now try this

Think of a stereotyped character in a film, a TV advert and a computer game and, for each, identify how they are represented. Consider how they speak, how they dress, their body language, their relationships and their lifestyle.

In your exam, you may need to identify and describe stereotyped characters.

Audience positioning

Laura Mulvey argued that audiences, whether they are male or female, have to view women from the vantage point of a heterosexual man – the male gaze.

Female and male roles

Mulvey identified key differences between the roles of women and men in films.

Women	Men
Passive	Active
Looked at (objects of the gaze)	Looking (possessors of the gaze)
In need of protection	Protectors
Sexually submissive	Sexually dominant
Focus of sexual fantasies	Projectors of sexual fantasies
Ego needs ignored	Ego needs fulfilled
Supporting men	Taking the lead
Weak	Strong
Dependent	Independent

The look of the camera that records the film: invisible

The look of the audience that views the film: invisible



The look between the characters in the film: visible

Key terms

Voyeurism: gratification from observing or seeing others, especially when they are not aware of being watched (e.g. characters in a film); a controlling gaze that projects one's own fantasies onto those being watched.

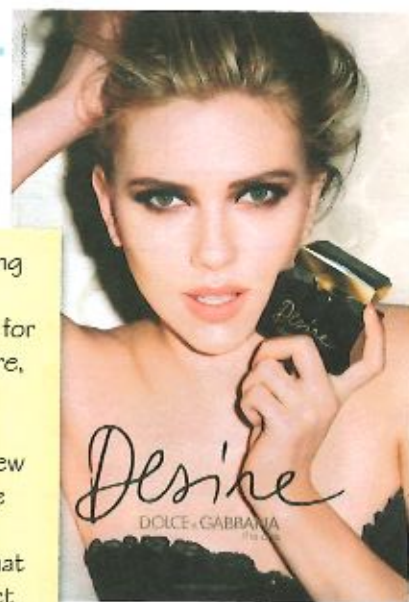
Scopophilia: deriving sexual pleasure from looking, often at erotic objects.

Fetishism: fixating on the object of the gaze to make it less threatening to the viewer by dehumanising it and transforming it into something satisfying in itself (e.g. a sexual object).

Exhibitionism: welcoming and encouraging an objectifying gaze.

Narcissism: recognising one's self in the image of another person being viewed.

In some advertising e.g., Dolce & Gabbana's advert for the perfume Desire, women who look at the image are encouraged to view themselves as the camera views the model, implying that buying the product will make them sexier and more attractive.



The male gaze: forty years later

Mulvey wrote her essay in 1975 about 1940s and 1950s films, but visual media still incorporate the male gaze. Films, fashion shoots, adverts and music videos often objectify women and present men as controlling.

Other perspectives?

The gaze may be from other perspectives than heterosexual males, for example white Americans or gay women. Sometimes the gaze sets out to alienate the audience, perhaps by shocking them with a different perspective. However, this is not common.

Now try this

Think about the last film you watched. Can you apply the concept of the male gaze to the treatment of its female characters? Think about how the female characters were portrayed via camera shots, how they dressed, how they behaved and how male characters interacted with them.

How media products construct messages and values

Media messages are not simply a mirror of reality. Both the creator and the audience construct the meaning of the media product through different processes.

Key terms about constructing messages

Term	Description	Examples
Construction	The process of making conscious or subconscious decisions when selecting and receiving the content of a media product	Newspaper photos are chosen from hundreds of alternatives; audiences choose what to see and what to remember
Anchorage	Directing the audience towards a desired outcome by attaching a meaning to something that could have many interpretations	Adding a caption, cropping a photograph, including particular music or using a specific camera angle
Presence	Including certain elements in a media product, either deliberately or not	TV news channels selecting one news story over another; photographers including only women in a photograph of nurses
Absence	Not including certain elements in a media product, either deliberately or not	TV news channels not selecting a particular news story; photographers excluding men from a photograph of nurses
Encoding	The process of constructing a meaning when producing a message	Taking a photograph, filming, speaking, gesturing
Decoding	The process of constructing a meaning to understand a message	Looking, watching, listening, deciphering a gesture

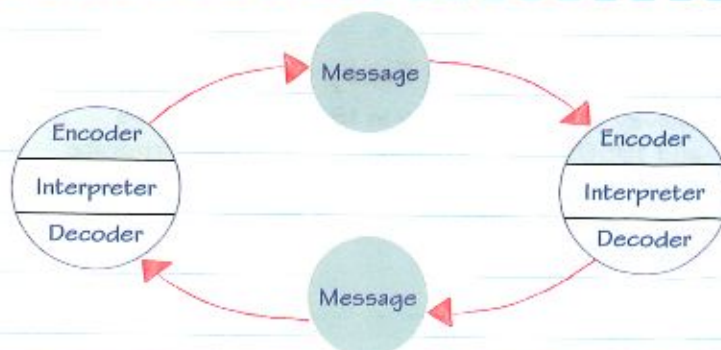
Constructing messages in news photographs



A woman jumps (or is pushed) from her burning flat during the 2011 London riots. In news reports, it was usually cropped to remove the background distractions and to focus on the woman's fall towards her rescuers. The cropping provided anchorage by increasing the sense of drama. Most photos from the riots focused on the hooded and masked rioters but their absence in this photo emphasises the impact of their alleged actions on others.

Encoding and decoding models

Schramm's model showed that communication is dynamic and potentially unreliable. Hall's model added 'noise' – the cultural and physical context of the sender and influences like the education, gender, ethics and role in society of the recipients. The meaning of the message isn't determined by the sender.



Now try this

Find another photo from the 2011 London riots, this time showing the rioters. Explain how anchorage is used to represent the rioters and how this attempts to direct the audience's opinions about them.

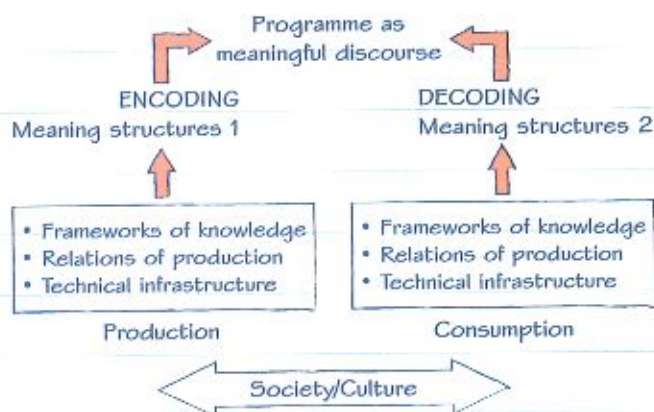
Consider presence and absence. What is shown? What is not shown?

Audience decoding and reading

Media products (texts) have preferred meanings, but the audience (decoder) may not read them as intended by the producer, as everyone has different social and cultural experiences.

Stuart Hall's model of mass communication

- 1 The same event can be encoded in more than one way.
- 2 The message can be decoded in more than one way.
- 3 Understanding the message can be a problematic process.



Hall's categories of reading

Preferred (dominant or hegemonic) reading

The decoder uncritically accepts and shares the meaning intended (consciously or subconsciously) by the producer. They respond in the way the producer expects them to and confirm the social order.



Negotiated reading

The decoder partly accepts the preferred meaning but also partly resists or modifies it to fit their own viewpoint.



Oppositional reading

The decoder may understand the preferred meaning but rejects it because their social position puts them in conflict with the preferred meaning.



Aberrant reading (addition to Hall's original theory)

The decoder creates their own interpretation that is entirely different to the intended meaning, such as a parody.



Open and closed texts (Barthes and Eco)

Both Barthes and Eco identified texts as 'open' and 'closed'.

- No texts are entirely open or closed; Barthes said texts are a tangle of threads that need to be unravelled. Different meanings appear as they are unravelled.
- However, some texts need to restrict their meaning (polysemy), such as instructions, directions.

Open text	Closed text
Many different meanings possible: encourages polysemy	A single meaning is intended: restricts polysemy
Decoder takes active role	Decoder takes passive role
Usually aesthetic or artistic	Usually informational
E.g. poem, abstract art, experimental film	E.g. textbook, recipe, party political broadcast, TV commercial, action film



How we decode depends on us understanding the conventions of various media forms (see pages 2–6 for more about this).

Now try this

Look at the cover of a men's health and lifestyle magazine, taking into account the images, words and layout. Explain what you think are the preferred, negotiated, oppositional and aberrant readings of the cover.

Decoding text

You will bring your own meaning to a text, depending on your personal viewpoint.

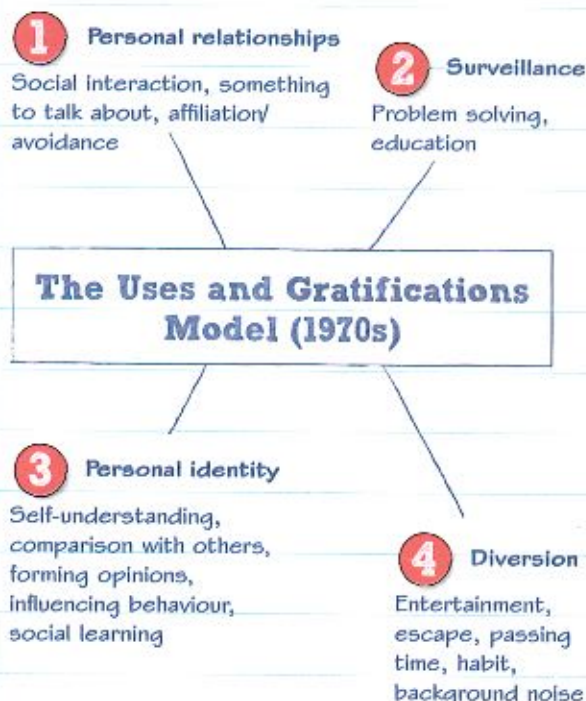
Always give examples when decoding a text to make it clear which reading you have chosen.

Passive and active viewing and intertextuality

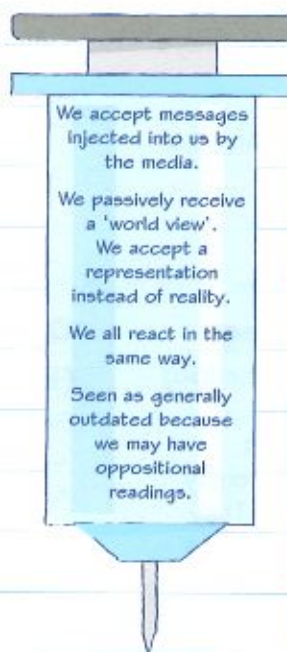
Audiences can be passive (complying with the message) or active (constantly filtering or resisting content). Intertextuality depends on us actively making connections to other media.

The active audience

Audience takes an active role in choosing and interpreting media.



The Hypodermic Model (1930s)



Are audiences as active as they think they are?

- ✓ The audience may not influence the media on offer.
- ✓ Even active audiences are influenced by dominant cultural assumptions.
- ✓ Media such as advertising create needs as well as fulfilling existing ones.
- ✓ The internet and social media mean media choices can be received simultaneously. Does this make the audience more or less active?

Intertextuality: key points

- All media products (texts) are influenced by others.
- Some refer directly to each other, such as film remakes, and parodies of well-known scenes or images.
- How we interpret intertextuality depends on our awareness of what is being referenced. We create meaning by recognising it (or not).
- Obvious intertextuality reminds us that we are viewing a mediated reality.
- The meaning of the original text is itself changed by being reused or referenced in another text.



The long-running cartoon *The Simpsons* is full of intertextual references that cover not only other TV programmes, films, books, famous paintings, plays and album covers but also the wider cultural and political world.

Now try this

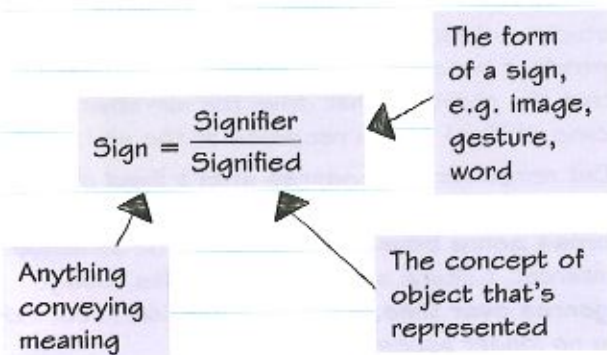
Watch one of Katy Perry's music videos, for example 'Last Friday Night', 'Unconditionally' or 'California Gurls', and list the examples of intertextuality you see.

Think about references to other music videos, films and social media; for example, 'Unconditionally' reflects scenes from Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*.

Applying semiotic theories to media language

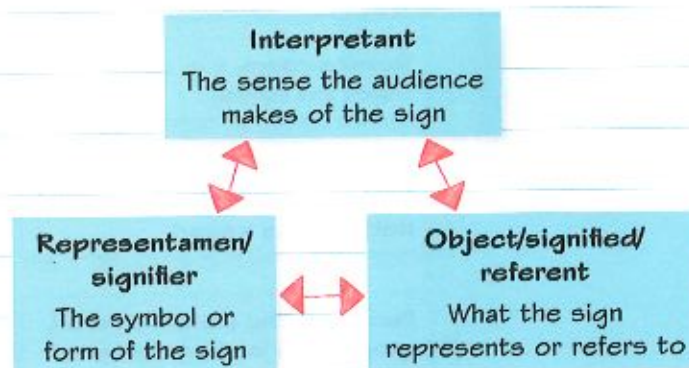
We actively create meaning by decoding signs. Semiology is the science of these signs in a linguistic context, associated with Ferdinand de Saussure. Semiotics takes a wider cultural view, and is associated with CS Peirce.

De Saussure's basic semiotic theory



The sign and signifier do not exist without each other. They only create meaning simultaneously.

Peirce's basic semiotic theory



The sign/signifier must be interpreted to exist. It only accesses its signified by being interpreted.

Key terms

Denotation: the literal meaning of a sign, e.g. a man gives a woman a diamond ring in a video.

Connotation: the agreed meanings attached to a sign, which can be emotional, cultural or symbolic, e.g. a diamond ring might connote love, engagement or wealth.

Symbol: a type of sign that stands for something specific. Its meaning has to be learned and connected to culture, e.g. a diamond ring, letters of the alphabet or a national flag.

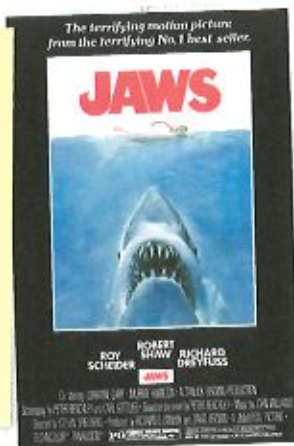
Media signs construct meaning

We mainly interpret signs unconsciously by relating them to familiar codes and conventions.

Each type of **media language** has its own **signs and codes**, although some overlap, for example, an angry monster signifies danger and an enemy in films, TV shows and computer games.

Stylistic codes (technical elements) also convey meaning. For example, fast music signifies urgency, dark shots can signify danger, and bright colours in magazine headlines might signify youthfulness and upbeat content.

The classic film poster for *Jaws* uses several signs to encourage the audience to interpret the content of the film in a particular way. The images work with the words (e.g. 'terrifying') to build up a sense of the film as a whole.



Signifier/denotation	Signifies/connotation	Interpretant
Large red word	Film title; danger; significance	This is a horror film or thriller about an enormous shark that attacks innocent people.
Swimming woman in white	Innocence; ignorance; vulnerability	
Blue darkening downwards	Sea; increasing threat; danger	
Large shark with sharp teeth	Threat; danger; fear; no escape; death	

Now try this

Pick two magazines aimed at different audiences, for example boys under 10, adults interested in fishing. Identify the signs and symbols on the covers that help the potential audience to decide whether the magazine is aimed at them.

Genre expectations and subversion

Generic codes and conventions help producers to shape their media product and help the audience to understand what is being conveyed and how they should react to it.

Examples of codes and conventions in film and TV genres

Codes:
rules to be followed so the audience can assign a common meaning

Symbolic codes, e.g. an actor suggests a character's feelings

Technical codes, e.g. camera angles and lighting

Symbolic and technical codes, e.g. music is a technical addition that suggests a mood

Conventions:
meanings derived from codes, common to a particular genre

Such as setting (historical period, geographical location, domestic/public space)

Such as characterisation (professional, moral, psychological or social status; stereotypes)

Such as props and objects (costumes; items used by actors; background objects)

Such as structure and plot (narrative structure; storytelling method; expected ending)

Audience expectations and subversions

Audiences expect certain **codes** and **conventions**, for example a TV quiz show is likely to have two teams, a host, scores and a live studio audience. **They may choose the media product** because of these conventions, knowing that the problems that drive the narrative (in the case of films) will be **resolved** at the end.

But remember **that genres aren't fixed** or don't conform to all conventions, and **most media will cross genre boundaries** to keep the audience's interest. Cultural and economic shifts **change genres over time**, for example racism in comedy is no longer acceptable.

Genres help us to see that **media aren't a reflection of 'reality'** but are constructed to conform to, or challenge, codes and conventions.

Genre applies to all media types

Although discussions of genre tend to focus on film, all media products can be categorised by genre, such as women's magazines, web adverts, comics, radio news bulletins.

Parody:
Humorous spoof of a genre, e.g. *Scary Movie*.

Pastiche: A copy of a genre; blurring genre boundaries, e.g. Quentin Tarantino's films.

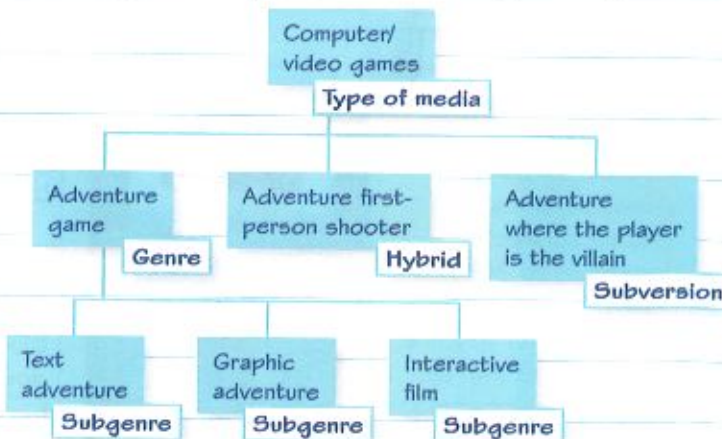
Subversion:
Genre expectations set up and then not fulfilled, e.g. the handsome prince turns out to be the villain in *Frozen*.

Challenging genres

Subgenre: Category within a genre, e.g. comedy horror (*Shaun of the Dead*).

Hybrid/cross genre: A mix of several genres, e.g. comedy horror costume drama (*Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*).

Examples of genres in computer games



Now try this

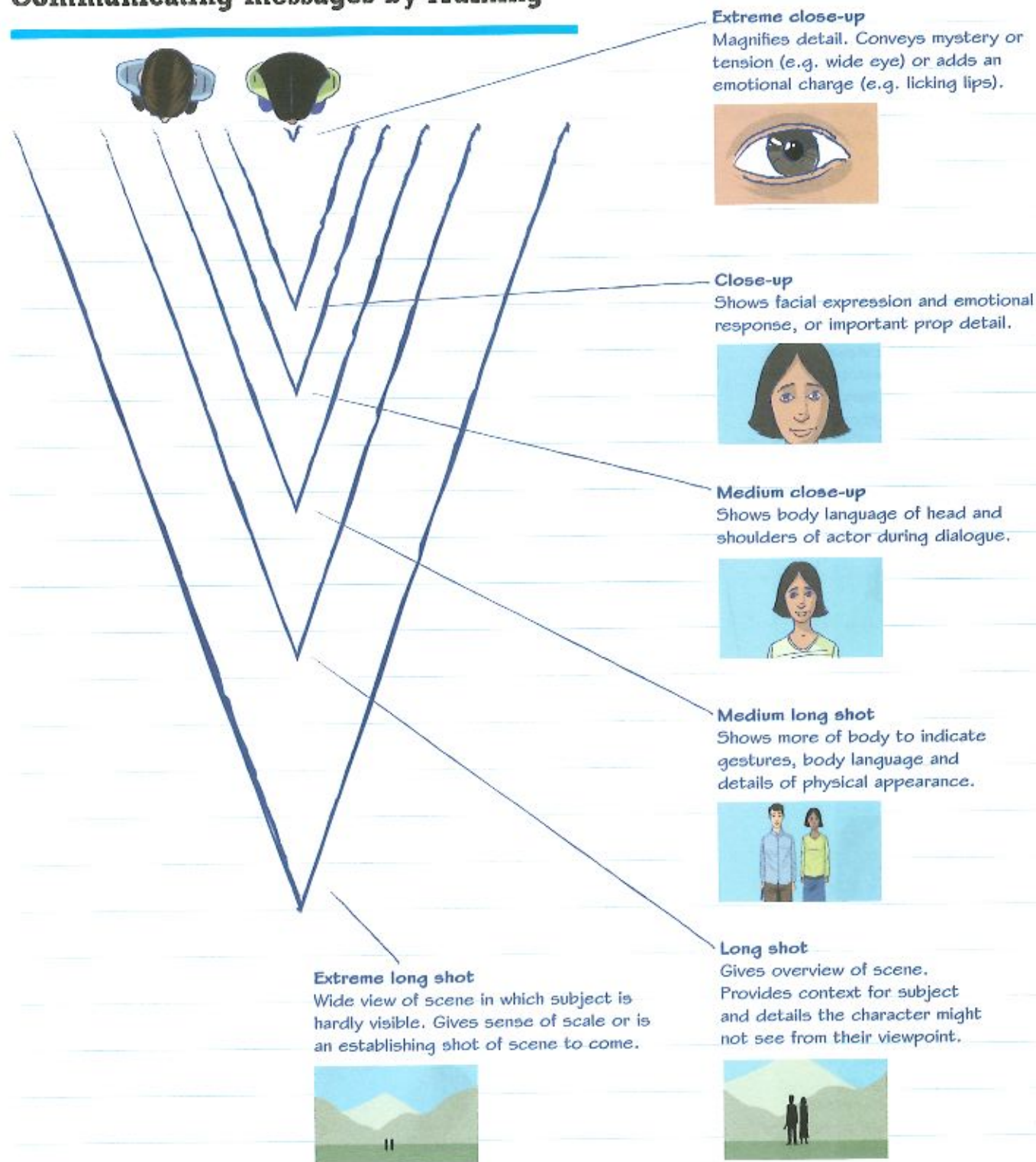
Watch an episode of a TV drama. Identify its subgenre and explain why you have classified it in this way. Then identify any examples of audience subversion, hybrid genres and pastiche within the drama.

In your exam, you may be asked to identify a media product's genre or subgenre, and to give reasons for your choice.

How framing creates meaning

The relative distance of the camera from the subject (actor or significant object) provides different information about a scene.

Communicating messages by framing



Now try this

Identify examples of each type of framing in a film trailer. Explain how different framing helps to convey a sense of what the film is about.

Some types of framing (e.g. extreme close-up) may not be present in a film trailer. Think about why this might be.

How camera positioning creates meaning

The angle and height of the camera can communicate a lot of information to the audience about characters, setting and narrative.

High angle

Camera is usually above head height and angled downwards on the subject. Character looks vulnerable or weak. Audience may identify with the 'underdog'.



Bird's-eye view

A shot from high above looking down. Subjects look small and insignificant. Can also be an establishing shot or used to film sports or documentaries as all the action is contained in a single view.



Overhead

Camera may not be very high but angle is directly overhead. Shows several characters and objects at once, so the viewer can see what the characters can't see.



Point of view (POV)

Camera puts the viewer in the position of a character, so we empathise with them. Builds tension and heightens emotion. In an associated POV, the camera moves with the character, as if it is on their shoulder or in their eyes.



Over the shoulder

Used to show two characters talking. Provides extra information through body language and distance. Draws audience into the conversation.



Low angle

Camera is low down, for example on the floor, and angled upwards to the subject. Establishes the power, superiority or dominance of the character and can make them a symbol of authority and respect.



Eye level

The most common angle. Camera is positioned as if it is a person observing a scene. Appears natural and heightens reality.



Two-shot

Both characters have equal prominence in the frame. This establishes their relationship via body language.



Canted angle/Dutch tilt

Camera angle is slanted to one side to portray unease, disorientation, action, drunkenness, illness or madness.



Now try this

Choose a non-fiction film or TV genre such as a news report, interview or documentary. Identify the types of angle and camera heights used and explain why the producers may have decided to use them.

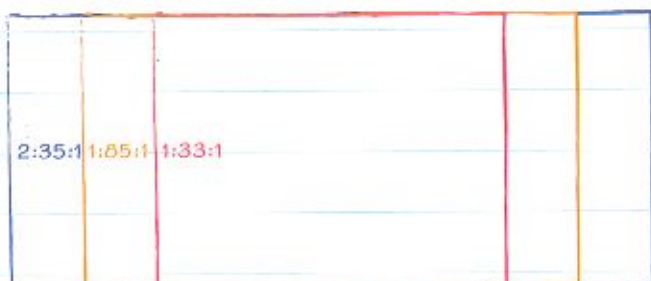
Remember to include examples, for instance 'The doctor was shot from a low angle so that she appeared more senior than the nurse, who was shot from a high angle in the previous frame'.

How shot composition and focus create meaning

Although you don't need to know the technical details, you do need to be aware of how shot composition and focus can influence the feel and message of a film.

Aspect ratios

- The first number is the width of the screen and the second is the height.
- Filmmakers may switch aspect ratios in a film to give different moods.
- 1:33:1 is the most common ratio for modern films.
- 4:3:1 is the Academy ratio common until the 1950s, so now feels vintage.
- 1:85:1 is more widescreen, allowing a more realistic take on what the eye can see.
- 2:35:1 and 2:39:1 are widescreen so feel epic and big budget; they are suitable for intense dramas and sci-fi but come across as a 'letterbox' on TV.
- 16:9:1 is used by TV cameras when a cinematic look isn't needed, such as for documentaries, adverts and sitcoms.



Rule of thirds

You need to know these key facts:

- An image can be divided into **nine equal parts** using a grid.
- The **four intersecting points** a third or two-thirds up or across the frame **can align features** in a shot.
- It is thought that framing a shot like this creates more **interest, energy** and **tension** than centring a subject.



Key terms

Depth of field: Focal length; the area in focus within the frame.

Deep focus: the foreground, middle ground and background of the frame are in sharp focus, giving a layered quality and allowing more detail to be shown.

Shallow focus: a narrow depth of field means that only one plane of the frame (usually the foreground) remains sharp, typically in a close-up.

Focus pull/rack focus: when the focal point changes within the frame, to shift the audience's attention or to point out a significant relationship.

Beyond the camera

- **Some visual effects** aren't possible to film in a single shot so are added separately.
- Filming subjects in front of **green or blue screens** then adding a background **extends our visual realities** by creating scenes that cannot be filmed, such as Superman flying.
- **Computer-generated camera effects** include picking out or adding colours; slowing time (as with the bullets in *The Matrix*), copying images to make crowd scenes, softening shots to blur imperfections and changing the original depth of field.
- All these techniques **add to the messages** conveyed to the audience.

Now try this

Watch a clip from a classic film in the Academy ratio (for example *The Wizard of Oz*, *Casablanca*, *Citizen Kane*) and then a clip from a modern film in 1:33:1 ratio. Explain how the different framing affects your reaction to the films.

Think about what can be included in a frame.

How colour creates meaning

Directors deliberately decide to feature a particular colour or colour palette (or no colour other than black and white) to raise certain associations and expectations in the audience.



Colour effects

- Films may be shot deliberately in **black and white** to suggest a period feel, such as *The Artist*.
- Pleasantville* starts in black and white and adds touches of colour as characters experience modern life.
- Schindler's List* is shot in black and white, apart from when the shot follows a little girl in a red coat being forced from her home.
- Filters can change colour composition by **draining or exaggerating colours**.
- Monochromatic** palettes emphasise a single colour. For example in *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, yellows and oranges create a particular, slightly surreal time and place.
- A **desaturated or sepia tone** can suggest the past or a dreary present, such as in a zombie film.
- Multicolour** palettes can suggest dreams and fantasy, such as in *The Wizard of Oz*.
- Overexposed** shots are bleached, often suggesting loss of consciousness.
- Underexposed** shots are dark and obscure, suggesting mystery and threat.

Now try this

Describe the effects that have been applied to this shot from *Saving Private Ryan*, a film about the Second World War. Explain how these effects influence the message conveyed.



You can find out more about warm and cold colours on page 20.

How the position of lighting creates meaning

The position, intensity, colour and quality of lighting can communicate character, mood and atmosphere. Light and shade can emphasise distance, time of day, season, emotion and attractiveness of the subject.

The basic three-point lighting system

Back light

- Behind subject, separating them from background
- Provides depth and 3D definition and highlights

Key light

- Main, brightest light (dominant light source)
- Aimed at subject of shot
- Slightly to one side; casts the most and darkest shadows

Back light






Key light

Fill light

Fill light

- Softer light
- Opposite key light; reduces key light's shadows
- Creates mood by making shadows darker or lighter
- Reduces contrast to show natural detail

Using lighting direction and shadows to convey meaning

Position of light to subject	Shadows cast	Effects	Example
Front	Behind the subject	Captures colour and detail, such as facial expression; can look dramatic but 2D	<i>Bones</i> (horror) 
Overhead	In eye sockets and under nose	Can look sinister or threatening	<i>The Godfather</i> (thriller) 
Under	Over most of face	Can look sinister or evil	<i>Dracula</i> (horror) 
Side	On opposite side of subject; can obscure part of the scene	Gives 3D appearance; adds drama; can look sinister	<i>Terminator 2: Judgement Day</i> (action) 
Behind/back	In front of the subject; darkens the shot	Definition; silhouettes; halo effect; muted colours; creates mystery and intensity; sense of intimacy	<i>The Lord of the Rings: The Hobbit An Unexpected Journey 2012</i> (fantasy) 

Now try this

These ideas apply to still photography too. Find examples of front, overhead, under, side and back lighting in magazine or newspaper adverts. Explain how the direction of the light conveys information about the product.

You might have difficulty finding examples of some light positions in adverts. Why do you think this is?

How colour and shadows create meaning

Coloured lighting and filters can establish mood



Colour temperature (kelvins)	Example colour	Effects
Hot (up to 2000K)	Red	Passion, discord
Warm (3000–5000K)	Gold, pink	Joy, romance, calmness
Cold (6000–10000K)	Blue, grey	Depression, seriousness, sadness
Natural (5500K)	White noon light	Reality, truth



The Matrix uses colour to establish setting and indicate opposing realities. Scenes set in 'the Matrix' are a sickly green, while scenes set in 'reality' are a soft blue.

High and low key lighting

The quality of the light in film and photography suggests the quality of the subject.

High key 	Bright fill lighting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ removes harsh shadows from an image ✓ emphasises whites and bright colours ✓ replicates a sunny day, so usually conveys a positive or upbeat tone; it is used to convey humour, beauty, optimism, youthfulness, energy or joy ✓ can also imply high quality in advertising. 	Genres: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Romance ✓ Musicals ✓ Comedy ✓ Action ✓ Product photography ✓ High-end brand advertising
Low key 	Less fill lighting than key lighting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ creates more shadows ✓ emphasises dark, grey and black tones ✓ creates a sense of drama and tension because of the contrast between light and dark areas ✓ conveys mystery, tension, alienation, foreboding and threat ✓ emphasises emotional intensity in specific scenes. 	Genres: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Horror ✓ Film noir ✓ Thrillers ✓ Detective

Now try this

Watch a clip from *The Matrix*, *American Beauty* or *Atonement* and explain how lighting is used to create mood and communicate meaning.

Think about the direction of the lighting, dominant colours and use of high and low key lighting.

How continuity editing creates meaning

Film editing is the process of selecting, cutting, sequencing and assembling camera shots and sound to produce a finished product. The choices made significantly influence the meanings and messages communicated. The following examples focus on film but computer games use the same techniques.



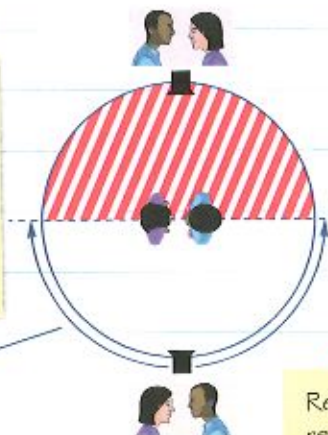
Narrative sequencing: continuity

- Classical continuity editing is using agreed conventions to cut and join shots to tell the story smoothly and clearly.
- This creates the least challenging and most structured narrative style for the audience.
- The shot sequences flow into each other and do not detract from the story.
- This makes the film's reality as near to the audience's reality as possible.
- Trying to recreate the 'real' world makes it easier for the audience to understand the action they see and hear.
- But the audience also accepts conventions as reality, such as elliptical editing (missing out events between shots to compress time) or intercutting (inserting contrasting shots into a scene).

The 180° rule

Keep to one side of characters or a moving object to prevent audience disorientation and confusion.

Extent of camera movement to maintain continuity



The effects of editing

Establishing shot: A long or extreme long shot showing the spatial relationship between, or location of, characters, objects and setting.

Shot/reverse shot: During dialogue, the camera cuts back and forth along the central line from one character (over the shoulder or often facing left) to another (over the shoulder or facing right), pushing action onwards.

30° rule: The camera angle between two consecutive shots should move by less than 30° for continuity.

Cross-cut/parallel edit: This is cutting between actions in different locations to convey the impression that two or more events are occurring simultaneously (parallel editing) or are related (cross-cutting), to build suspense or show their relationship.

Cutaway: A shot of something related to but outside the main action of a scene. It cuts away from the main action to a separate or secondary action, for example to show the response of another character.

Match on action/action match: Two shots are linked by two framings of the same action, for example a character begins to move or speak in one shot and their movement or dialogue continues in the next shot(s). Can indicate time passing.

Eyeline match: A cut between two shots. A character looks at something and in the next shot we see what they see, such as the person they are talking to, looking at them.

Re-establishing shot: This is another long shot to reinforce the setting or show how it has changed.

180° rule: This maintains continuity by ensuring that the action in a sequence of shots takes place in the half circle in front of the camera, so that characters' positions aren't reversed. Crossing the line creates a disorientating change in perspective (see opposite).

Now try this

Choose a short scene from a TV soap opera or drama. Explain how continuity editing is used to create a sense of reality.

Remember to refer to editing terminology like 'shot/reverse shot', 'match on action' and 'eyeline match'.

How choosing and linking shots creates meaning

As well as creating the impression of realism, editing can also create new meanings and disrupt the sense of reality through unexpected or obvious shot transitions.

Montage

A rapid succession of different shots, often using a mixture of camera angles, distances and transitional techniques

A sequence of shots in different settings or times that compress narrative time, e.g. Rocky training for a fight

We accept this convention as a compression of time that creates excitement

A sequence of apparently unrelated shots to break continuity or make symbolic links that create new meaning

We accept this convention as the highlights of a long period of action that could not be shown in real time

A sequence of shots in the same setting over a short time period that convey action or panic, e.g. the shower scene in *Psycho*

We are disorientated or confused, or create our own meanings from what we see

Montage: the Kuleshov effect

- ✓ We naturally link images and interpret them to project our own meanings from visual clues.
- ✓ We automatically make a narrative from the different shots we see.
- ✓ To demonstrate this, early Russian filmmaker Kuleshov made short films that linked apparently unrelated shots.
- ✓ Such sequences disorientate viewers and/or provoke associations.

New meanings are created when shots are juxtaposed.

Visual effects

The duration of a shot will usually reflect its narrative context.

Long shot duration	Short shot duration
Intimacy	Action
Emotion	Urgency
Focus on facial expression or setting	Focus on movement
Directs attention to details	Directs attention to bigger picture

Jump cut: An abrupt, disorienting cut in the middle of a shot to another scene or time.

The speed of a sequence will usually reflect its tone or genre.

Slow motion	Fast motion	Freeze frame
Camera sped up (overcranking) so movement seems slower when projected at normal speed	Camera slowed down (undercranking) so movement seems faster when projected at normal speed	A single image is repeated over several frames to suggest a static image after the action
Expands time period shown	Contracts time period shown	Stops time
Lingers on a scene to intensify drama or romance	Rushes through a scene to intensify comedy or action	Focuses attention on one image to signify ambiguity, death or significance

Continuity cut: A cut that takes the viewer smoothly, subtly and logically from one shot to another.

Fade in: A shot gradually appears from a blank black, white or coloured screen.

Fade out: A shot gradually disappears into a blank black, white or coloured screen.

Transitional devices

Dissolve/cross-fade: The end of a shot remains on the screen and gradually fades out after the next shot has started, often to suggest time passing.

Wipe: A line across the screen pushes one shot off the screen and replaces it with another.

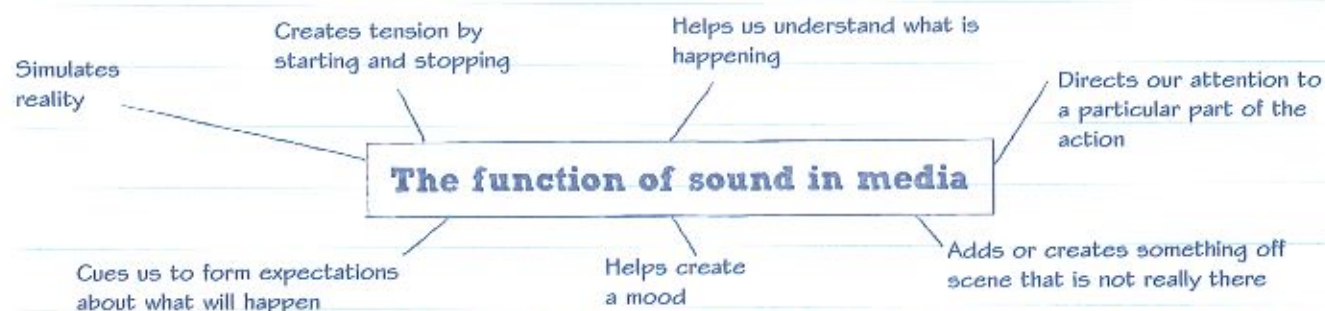
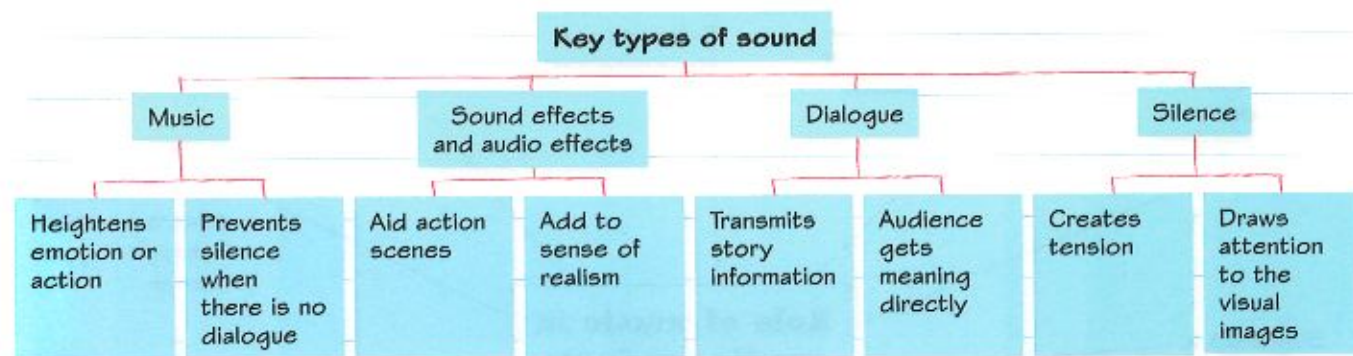
Now try this

Choose a two-minute sequence from a film or TV show and explain how it has been edited to create meaning and set a mood.

Is the editing continuous or discontinuous? What transitional devices are used? How are shot durations used? Overall, how does the editing help you to understand the scene?

How sound creates meaning

Layers of sound communicate mood, tone and story in many types of media product, including film, TV shows, advertisements and computer games. The relationship of sound – and silence – to the visual images is important, as they work together to create meaning.



Diegetic sound	Non-diegetic sound
Created within the film's world	From outside the film's world
Characters can (probably) hear it	Characters cannot hear it
May be speech, weather, music being played as part of the story, or objects in the field of vision	May be a musical sound track, voiceovers, dramatic sound effects
Assists continuity editing	Assists in creating mood or drama
Adds to sense of realism without being distracting	Unnatural in terms of the 'real' world but often a standard convention to help audience understanding
Comes from a character or object that can be seen on screen or whose presence is implied	Source cannot be seen or implied on screen
May continue over several shots to bring the narrative together	Added after filming as part of the editing process
Includes ambient sound: background noises that may or may not be in the field of vision, such as the hum of a crowd or birdsong	Ambient sound may be added later to intensify the scene or add sounds that cannot be recorded while filming (such as alien voices)
Includes synchronous sound: sound that occurs at the same time as the action on screen that makes it, for example dialogue matches actors' lip movements	Includes asynchronous sound: sound occurs before the action on screen that makes it, for example dialogue happens before actors' lip movements

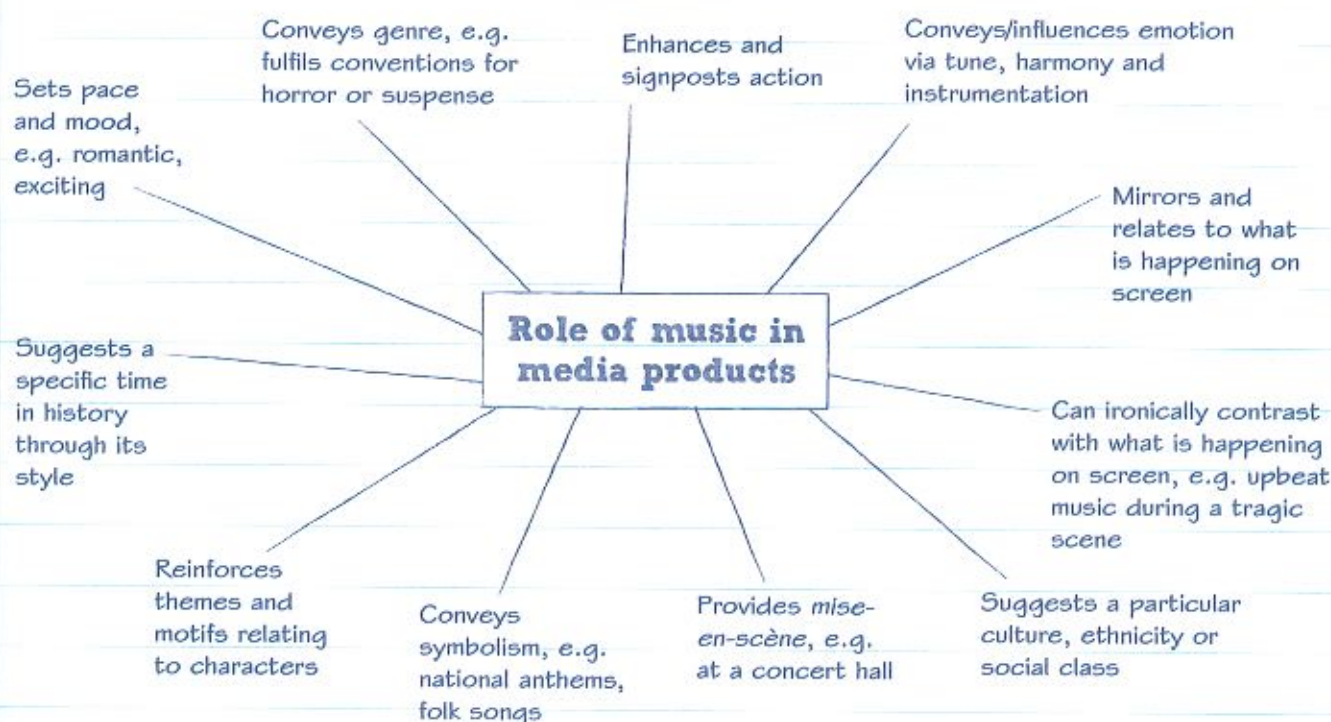
Now try this

Watch a three-minute clip from a TV drama or a film with the sound muted. Write down how the clip made you feel (such as scared, happy) and what you think were the most important things that happened. Now watch it again with the sound on. How have your feelings and opinions about the clip changed?

Think about how the sound communicates meanings and messages that are not possible with just visual elements.

How music creates meaning

You may or may not notice the music in films, TV shows and computer games but it still conveys meaning in many different ways.



Key terms for film music

Soundtrack: The music used in a film (such as songs chosen to accompany scenes) and often also all the sounds used within the production.

Score: The original music composed for a particular production, played during the action to set mood and atmosphere.

Incidental music: Background music that accompanies a particular scene to create or enhance its atmosphere.

Theme music: A tune or collection of notes that is associated with the production as a whole.

Sound/musical motif: Sound or music played to accompany a specific character or setting, or to shape the narrative, such as the beeping of a heart monitor in a hospital, or a creepy tune played when the villain enters the shot.



This clip from *The Matrix* (from the point at which Neo is attacked by his arch enemy) layers various sound effects and stirring music over just 24 seconds to build up to a narrative climax and then fade out to silence.

Watch the clip here



Now try this

Watch this trailer from the TV adventure series *Supergirl*.

Explain how music is used with other sound effects to raise the audience's excitement and anticipation.

Watch the clip here



How dialogue creates meaning

Speech obviously conveys messages via words. However, additional meanings are given through the way in which this dialogue is delivered.

What is dialogue?

The sound of characters speaking






Transmits story information

Important sound for conveying plot and character

Accent, tone, pitch, volume, speed and rhythm indicate characters' background and mood

The words characters use indicate their intelligence and social status

Modes of address

Monologue 	<p>One person speaking within the diegesis.</p> <p>May convey plot or character's thoughts and feelings that other characters may not know. Can appear natural (e.g. character talking to a photo or pet) or draw attention to character's state of mind.</p>
Voiceover 	<p>One person speaking from outside the diegesis.</p> <p>May narrate the story or convey plot or character's thoughts and feelings that only audience knows. Draws attention to audience being beyond the film's diegesis.</p>
Direct address 	<p>One person speaking directly to the camera.</p> <p>Usual convention for documentaries and news reports. In TV and films, it breaks realism by acknowledging the audience. Often used for comic asides, such as in the TV comedy <i>Miranda</i>.</p>
Dialogue 	<p>Two or more characters speak to one another.</p> <p>Natural way of conveying plot and character information, and establishing relationships.</p>
Overlapping dialogue (multilogue) 	<p>Two or more characters speak at once.</p> <p>Can convey realism but the meaning of the words may be lost. Dialogue may also overlap between scenes, reducing the sense of realism.</p>

Now try this

Some shows, like the sitcoms *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, *The League* and *Outnumbered*, are semi-scripted to allow the actors to improvise some of their dialogue. Watch a five-minute clip from one of these sitcoms and explain the effect of the dialogue on the audience.

Identify examples of monologue, dialogue and multilogue, and how they influence the sense of reality.

How sound and audio effects create meaning

Sound effects are added either to increase the sense of realism (e.g. adding in everyday sounds like traffic, rain or creaking doors) or to draw attention to the construct (e.g. comic sounds).

Foley sound effects

- **Background noise** on location may mask dialogue so needs to be minimised. Foley sounds are added post-production to **replace and enhance sounds** the audience expects to hear.
- Examples include footsteps, punches, heartbeats, crowds roaring, saddles creaking, electronics beeping.
- They may be created **manually** (e.g. by breaking a carrot to signify breaking bones) or chosen from a **pre-recorded** sound library.

Real sounds are replaced with artificial sounds to increase the audience's immersion in the film's realism.

Key terms for sound editing transitions

Often, sound and visual editing work together to reinforce a message or progress the plot.

Sound bridge: A diegetic or non-diegetic sound continues from one shot or transition to the next, for example speech (shot/reverse shot, see page 21), music, a ringing telephone, a dog barking. This is part of continuity editing (see page 21) to link the scene together.

Fade in/fade out: Sound gradually becomes louder or quieter, often simultaneously with a visual fade in/out cut.

Edit on the beat: Shots start and end with the rhythm of the music, influencing the sense of pace and energy.

Edit off the beat: Shots start and end slightly before or after the rhythm of the music, creating a disconcerting effect.

Edit on the cut: Shots are cut in time with the music.

Reverberation:

The effect of sound waves bouncing off walls and objects when travelling around a space, e.g. the sound of a character speaking in a large hall

Echo: Sound repeating back, e.g. the sound of a character shouting into a canyon

Audio effects add mood and depth

Delay: Sound arriving with the listener slightly after the action that made it, e.g. the sound of an explosion

Distortion: A sound that isn't quite clear or as expected, e.g. interference in a communication with outer space



This clip from *Mission Impossible* (which shows Ethan Hunt on a mission to retrieve a disc from CIA Headquarters) contains no music or dialogue but creates tension entirely through distinctive sound effects matching the visuals.

Watch the clip here



Now try this

Watch a fight scene in an action film or TV show. Describe how sound and audio effects are used to make the fight seem either real or exaggerated.

Can you identify Foley sounds and digitally enhanced effects? Are the sounds diegetic or non-diegetic? How are sound editing transitions used to increase or decrease the realism?

Mise-en-scène

Mise-en-scène covers what the audience can see. It often refers to films or TV but applies to any visual media, including computer games and still images. It often uses our acceptance of conventions to convey messages about what is happening.

Setting/location

- Provides information to orientate viewers (e.g. time, historical period, place, character's status)
- Creates mood and guides our attention
- May play a significant part in the action
- Communicates themes and comments on action
- Reflects a character's emotional state of mind
- Contributes to dramatic impact, e.g. by building certain expectations



Props

- Objects in the setting which play a part in the action or representation
- May set the plot in motion
- May reinforce genre, e.g. stakes, coffins in vampire films
- Anchor and define characters



Figure expression

- Includes facial expressions, gestures and the posture of actors
- Reveals relationships, thoughts, emotions, e.g. terror
- Can include movement across the shot and position of characters, e.g. body language in dialogue



Mise-en-scène



Everything we see in an image

Costume, hair and make-up

- Convey a character's personality or status
- Draw attention to differences between characters
- May be realistic or stylised to suggest genre
- Set scene in past, present or future
- Anchor setting and culture, e.g. 19th-century Transylvania
- May be symbolic or stereotypical, e.g. Dracula's pale face suggests he's (un)dead



Colour

- Particular colours may be highlighted to draw attention to items
- Different colours or shades convey meaning, e.g. red = blood or danger; darkness = secrets or evil



For more about the meaning of colour in film, see page 18.

Analysing representation in mise-en-scène

- Each aspect of *mise-en-scène* has **hidden meanings** that signal to the audience **how we are supposed to feel**.
- Think about why certain **conventions** have been used – are they reinforcing **stereotypes** or drawing attention to them?
- Consider whether the visual elements **reinforce the realism** of the scene or if they seem **unnatural** within the narrative world.
- Remember to note **what has been left out** as well as what has been put in.
- Look for **contradictory visual and sound clues**, such as a character crying to upbeat music; screams heard in an idyllic setting.
- Consider what **assumptions** the audience might make about what they can see, and the effect these assumptions have.

Now try this

Watch a short scene from a TV soap that you have never seen before. Identify how different elements of the *mise-en-scène* provide information about the story and characters.

Try watching it with the sound muted and write down what you see: who, what and where.

Design elements and principles

Print and web pages have a hierarchical visual and content structure or 'page layout'. Decisions are taken to use different design and typographical techniques to emphasise different aspects to the viewer and create meaning. Some of these techniques can also apply to moving images and computer games.

Design elements

Lines

- Direct attention to a particular point
- Separate elements
- Form borders to constrain elements
- Form shapes

Shape

- Flat, 2D form with a defined outline
- Infinite possibilities but simple shapes have more impact
- Can suggest a specific form or item
- Can direct eye movement

Direction

- Vertical lines indicate strength and growth
- Horizontal lines indicate calm and stillness
- Diagonal lines indicate movement and dynamism

Size

- Larger elements indicate importance, such as headlines
- Different sizes create a visual hierarchy

Texture

- The impression of texture can be created via shading
- Texture makes an element stand out

Colour

- Contrasting colours are easier to read, for example black type on a white background
- Creates mood (see page 20)

Dimension (2D, 3D)

- Images giving the illusion of 3D can draw viewers in as they may seem more real (as with digital games)
- Flat images (2D) are easier to see

Combine design elements according to design principles to communicate your message.

Design principles

Balance

- Provides stability and structure by placing elements of equal weight on each side
- Symmetrical balance evenly weights the elements on both sides
- Asymmetrical balance is more diverse, e.g. by balancing a dark element with light elements, or a large image with several smaller ones

Alignment

- Creates a visual connection between elements, even if they are not placed together
- Orders and organises elements so viewers can make meaning from them
- Positioning may be vertical, horizontal or diagonal

Repetition

- Ties together individual elements to create association and consistency
- Repeated elements could be, for example, line, colour, shapes, texture
- A pattern is the result of regular repetition

Contrast

- Highlights key elements within the design to guide viewers to the most important parts
- The key elements look different: for example, bigger, bolder, underlined, a different colour, in a new font, marked by thicker lines

Space/proximity

- Grouping similar elements creates a relationship between those elements
- This makes it easier for the viewer to interpret the design
- It also provides a focal point for getting the message across

Now try this

Explain how this magazine advert for Ikea combines design elements and principles to communicate a message about the brand.



Page layout and composition

Whether looking at a printed page or screen, readers should be able to identify the most important elements, in which order to look at them and how to take action. The design must follow a clear, consistent visual hierarchy so that the reader can understand the message.

Creating meaning with images and photos

Size: The larger the image in relation to other elements, the more important it seems.

Manipulation: The photo may be enhanced from the original (e.g. the sky made bluer) or additional elements added (e.g. writing on a T-shirt).

Treatment of images

Juxtapositions: Images are placed together to create a linking or contrasting relationship between them, whether or not there was one originally.

Effects: Filters can be applied to increase or decrease saturation or colour to gain a certain effect (e.g. sepia indicates age and over-exposure suggests nostalgia).

Key terms

Page layout: Positioning and arranging page elements to create a design for the overall appearance of a page or screen of a magazine, newspaper, website, leaflet, print advert, even some computer games

Typeface: The shape of the letters, numbers and symbols that make up a design of type

Typography: The style and size of typefaces

Font: A particular style of typeface, contained in a digital file in software

Which font best suits your message?

Serif fonts are seen as classic, formal and easier to read, making the message easier to remember.

Sans-serif fonts are seen as less fussy and more modern.

Some fonts look unprofessional and undermine the content.

Combine basic methods to create contrast and establish a visual typographic hierarchy:

- Size
- Weight
- Colour
- Position
- Form
- Font

White space

Space is just as important as what's actually on the page or screen. White space:

- separates elements
- indicates what is unrelated
- makes the page more accessible
- draws attention to important elements.

This applies to words and images. Our brain uses space to make links and meaning. What do you see below – a vase or two profiles?



The Gestalt (unified whole) theory

How we create meanings from images:

Gestalt's law	Our visual perception
Proximity	We perceive objects close together as a related group.
Similarity	We link meanings to objects that look similar.
Figure/ground	We see a relationship between an object and the surrounding space.
Symmetry	We perceive objects as pairs around a central space.
Continuity	Our eye moves from object to object, linking them in our minds.
Closure	Our mind supplies missing pieces of an image.

Now try this

Look at a local takeaway menu (such as for pizza or curry). Identify and explain how different page elements have been combined to create a visual hierarchy of dishes.

Design of gaming worlds

Gaming worlds are often similar to those in films and TV shows, using the same conventions, *mise-en-scène* and genres. However, players interact with the game as an invisible but key element. By triggering events, players have the illusion of control over the game's world.

Key terms

Interaction: Two-way communication between the player(s) and the game that leads to something happening in the game.

User interface (UI): The means by which a player controls the software and hardware to interact with the game or app. It can also be what the user sees on screen.

Diegetic UI elements: Items that help to immerse the player in the game's world, such as a gun, character or setting.

Non-diegetic UI elements: Items from outside the game's world that help the player to play the game, such as text showing points earned or health; or volume control icons.

Immersion: The player fully enters the gaming world by adopting its rules and conventions.

Learnability: The game should be easy to use from the start. Functionality is only what the user needs to reach their goal.

Visibility: The most important information is the most visible and related to user's goals.

Consistency: Similar elements should always look and act in the same way.

Memorability: Functions should become easier to use each time, especially when used often.

Simplicity: Layout is uncluttered, focusing attention and making tasks easy to complete (progressive disclosure).

Efficiency: The minimum number of stages are required to complete a task.

Satisfaction: The game should be fun (or not frustrating).

Error recovery: Users shouldn't be able to make a mistake.

Mapping: What happens is what the user expects to happen.

Feedback: The user should be in control of the interface.

First person: Player sees gameplay from the character's perspective.

Third person: Player can see the character they control and the wider setting.

Scrolling: Player sees the character and gameplay moving from left to right, from a side-view angle.

Aerial: Player sees the character and gameplay from above.

Context-sensitive: The view changes according to what is happening, giving a film-like feel.

Creating a gaming world

- ✓ Games should immerse players inside a narrative or gaming world.
- ✓ Players must feel they are an active part of the story and not just an observer.
- ✓ Interaction drives this belief via constant feedback between a player's choice of action, the game's response and the player's response to that.
- ✓ Touch-based devices become an extension of the interface, adding to the sense of immersion.
- ✓ This reality can be broken when thumbs obscure the screen or feedback is delayed (e.g. due to problems with Wi-Fi or device).

Gaming perspectives

Now try this

Choose a game with a strong immersive world. Explain how its visual elements draw players in and encourage them to interact.

Consider the diegetic and non-diegetic elements, as well as the design principles that help players to immerse themselves easily in the game.

The impact of representation

As you have seen throughout Unit 1, representation is about how we are given and receive information and ideas. It is selective, including or emphasising some aspects and excluding or minimising others. The next pages look at the impact of representation on individuals, groups and society, and how it may change behaviour and attitudes.

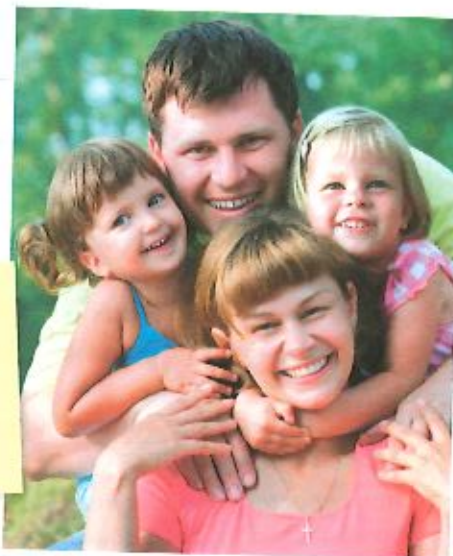
Representation recap

Representation: To describe or portray something by selecting from different possibilities. It is about:

- ✓ how we are given information and ideas about the world
- ✓ how the chosen combination of words, sounds and images can affect the behaviour and beliefs of the audience
- ✓ how this compares with 'normal' society and behaviour.

Stay aware of how things are represented

Remember: every representation carries the values of the producer and aims to shape opinions.



Media effect theory

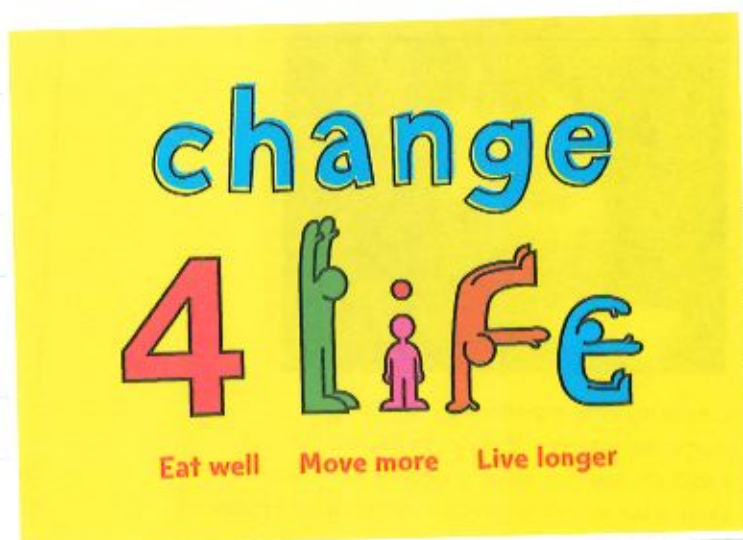
- Considers how the media affect society and how society affects the media.
- Suggests audiences' ideas and behaviour can be influenced by what they see and hear in the media.
- Tends to treat the audience as passive – their behaviour is affected by exposure to particular aspects of media content.

But:

- Some evidence suggests that young offenders consume less media than other young people and are not any more interested in violent content.
- Children can analyse and criticise the media from a young age.
- The theory is selective in its criticism of media depictions of violence.
- The theory does not attempt to understand meanings of the media.

Case study: Change4Life

- Launched by the government in 2009, this programme initially focused on encouraging parents to change their behaviour to improve family health.
- It now also encourages the NHS, local authorities, businesses, charities, schools and community leaders to improve health and well-being.
- Supporters can use the brand across a range of media, such as TV adverts, websites, social media, animations, booklets, posters, stickers, case studies and games.



Now try this

Look at the Change4Life website. Analyse the ways in which it encourages users to become engaged with the campaign and change their behaviour.

Consider the branding, layout, images, words used and activities available.

Positive effects of the media

All aspects of the media can have a positive influence on people's lives, by teaching new knowledge and skills and encouraging them to behave more thoughtfully and generously.

How the media can positively influence behaviour

Some studies link widely publicised events with subsequent behaviour. The Samaritans offers best practice guidelines for responsible news reporting of suicide to prevent copycat behaviour by:

- raising awareness of suicide as a social and public health issue
- describing signs to look out for
- not glamorising or sensationalising the event
- highlighting the sources of help
- challenging stigmas
- not reporting the circumstances in detail to reduce copycat behaviour linked to 'over-identification' by vulnerable individuals.

The guidance includes advice on placement of the news story, use of language and use of photos.

How media products can promote education and share information

Expose us to new places, animals, people, ideas, issues and cultures

Inspire us to try new activities

Encourage us to think about new ideas

Expose us to diversity, especially ethnic diversity

Increase creativity, such as when using software, apps and websites to create art, music and media

Expose us to different points of view

Help us to develop literacy and numeracy skills via blogs, forums, computer games, websites and apps

Encourage social skills, for example via social networking, exposure to TV dialogue and cooperative digital games

Develop problem-solving and critical thinking skills, for example through playing some apps and digital games

Increase our ethical, political and social awareness, for example by watching current affairs, listening to podcasts and reading online posts

Inspire community and volunteer work

Promote better health, for example by encouraging healthy lifestyles

Ways the media can positively influence us

Positive copycat behaviour



Celebrity role models may endorse a particular cause, lifestyle, behaviour or product and can inspire people to follow their example of hard work or positive values.

Now try this

Research a celebrity who is well known for their charity work or commitment to hard work (such as an Olympic athlete). Explain why their behaviour might inspire fans to use their example to also behave positively.

Negative effects of the media

Exposure to media products can have a negative effect on people's ideas and behaviour, ranging from anxiety in response to news reports, to unrealistic expectations of body image or violent actions after watching a film or playing a computer game.

Negative copycat behaviour

Studies generally show a link between violent media content (for example in films, TV shows, games) and aggressive thoughts or behaviour in the audience.

NOTE: Affected people may be vulnerable for other reasons.

Aggressive responses are more likely when media violence seems to be:

- committed by people who are attractive or similar to the viewer
- humorous
- sanitised
- justified within the narrative
- rewarded.



News media often portray young men as gang members or criminals. The public may apply this to all young men, even to the majority who make a positive contribution to society.

Desensitisation

This is the belief that being repeatedly exposed to distressing behaviour or circumstances in the media reduces the impact of such behaviour/circumstances in real life.

People who have grown up seeing thousands of acts of violence on TV may identify with perpetrators rather than victims and see violence as a normal problem-solving device.

They may use or accept violence in their everyday life, as a perpetrator or a victim.

People can also be desensitised to images of suffering (such as images of refugees), making them less likely to want to help.

Moral panic

News media are often accused of encouraging the idea that a negative situation is out of control and threatening society as a whole, and of passing a judgement on who is to blame that might not be accurate. Typical examples are:

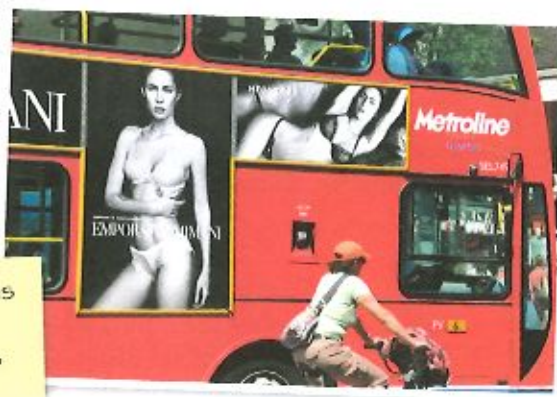
- terrorism
- immigration
- flu epidemics
- deviant behaviour of young people.

This may influence who the public votes for and who they choose to help and support in their community.

Objectification

- Treating someone as an object rather than a person, with no thoughts, feelings or rights.
- The term usually refers to women's bodies being presented only as sources of sexual pleasure, but can also refer to men, or to any objectifying role such as 'mother', 'nerd' or 'slave'.

Exposure to sexualised images, such as this Emporia Armani advert, may lead to some women seeing themselves as valuable only as sex objects.



Now try this

Analyse the cover of a women's fashion magazine. Explain how women are objectified through its words, images and layout.

Socialisation and types

Socialisation

The ongoing process of learning, developing and sharing the norms, values, ideas, behaviours, social skills and customs that form your personal identity and help you to integrate into your group or society.

- Socialisation is the combination of internally imposed (wanting to conform) and externally imposed rules and expectations.
- It contributes to cultural continuity.
- It reinforces social position.
- Opinions are likely to tend towards those the group or society finds acceptable ('normal').
- Not conforming to these views may be regarded as abnormal or immoral.
- Inherited and genetic influences also play a part.

Stereotyping recap

Look at page 8 for more details about Dyer's theory of stereotyping. Remember these points too:

- Media-created stereotypes can be **negative** (asylum seekers, hoodies) or **positive** (selfless mothers, heroic soldiers) but both can be misleading.
- Stereotypes are constructed to **fit with the media and genre** (for example, in a film, this is achieved via soundtrack, close-ups, script, lighting, editing; in a magazine this is via words, type, choice of photo, headlines).
- Stereotypes usually focus on **appearance** (such as clothes, skin colour, voice) and **behaviour** (such as obeying or disobeying cultural norms, habits, hobbies).

	Description	Representation	Examples
Type	A 'typical' character with easy-to-recognise characteristics	A shorthand way of conveying what this generic person is like	Shopkeeper, student, businessman
Stereotype	A simplified representation of a specific person's or group's appearance, character and beliefs, reinforced via repetition	Often depicted humorously but as a negative depiction of 'otherness', that is, different from the presumed audience	Jewish mother, gay actor, Asian shopkeeper
Archetype	A familiar type of character who has emerged from hundreds of years of fairytales and storytelling	Used as a symbol of deeply held cultural beliefs, values and prejudices	Hero, innocent, sage (wise person), ruler, caregiver

Now try this

Research the depiction of brides-to-be online or in magazines. Describe ways in which the media stereotype brides. Analyse how this contributes to the socialisation of attitudes to women and marriage.

Think about what they usually look like, who it is assumed they are marrying, how they behave (or are expected to behave) and which culture is dominant.

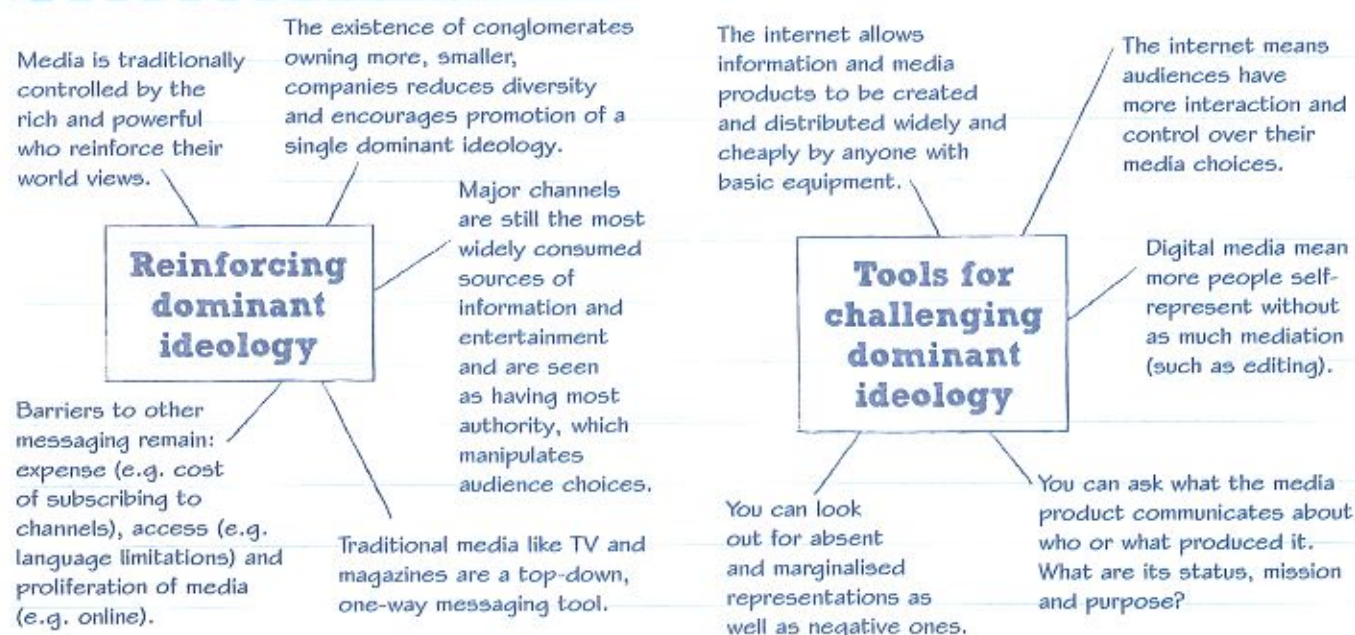


Ideology

It is hard to measure to what extent audiences accept viewpoints constructed by the media. They may challenge the dominant ideology by mocking or criticising the messages they receive but some theorists argue they only have an illusion of power and choice.

Ideology and some political theories of representation

Cultural idea	What is it?
Ideology	The influence of ideas on people's beliefs and actions, especially ideas that come from those in power. A set of ideas that gives a partial or selective view of reality. Certain beliefs become normal and generally accepted as 'how the world works'.
Feminism	An approach that challenges traditional power structures between the genders. Feminists believe that, as media institutions are mostly run by white, middle-class men, their ideology of this type of person maintaining power is perpetuated through the media.
Marxist cultural effects model	The idea that an elite few (capitalists) are in continual conflict with the masses by paying as little as possible for their labour while the masses try to get as much as possible out of their work. The media keep the masses happy so they keep supporting capitalist ideals, diverting them from issues like rights and working conditions. Moral panics divert attention away from capitalist mismanagement and help justify repressive laws and policing.
Hegemony	The idea that the dominant group persuades the masses that the power structure is necessary and in their favour. This is a negotiated process of controlling ideas and culture rather than using force to keep the masses conforming.
Liberal pluralism	The idea that free media respond to the demands of consumers via supply and demand. They give us what we want rather than telling us what to think.
Cross-cultural approaches/globalisation	The spreading or changing of a particular ideology across different cultures (e.g. changing games and TV shows for the country they are sold to) to reflect their ideologies more closely. American/European ideology is often imposed elsewhere in the world.



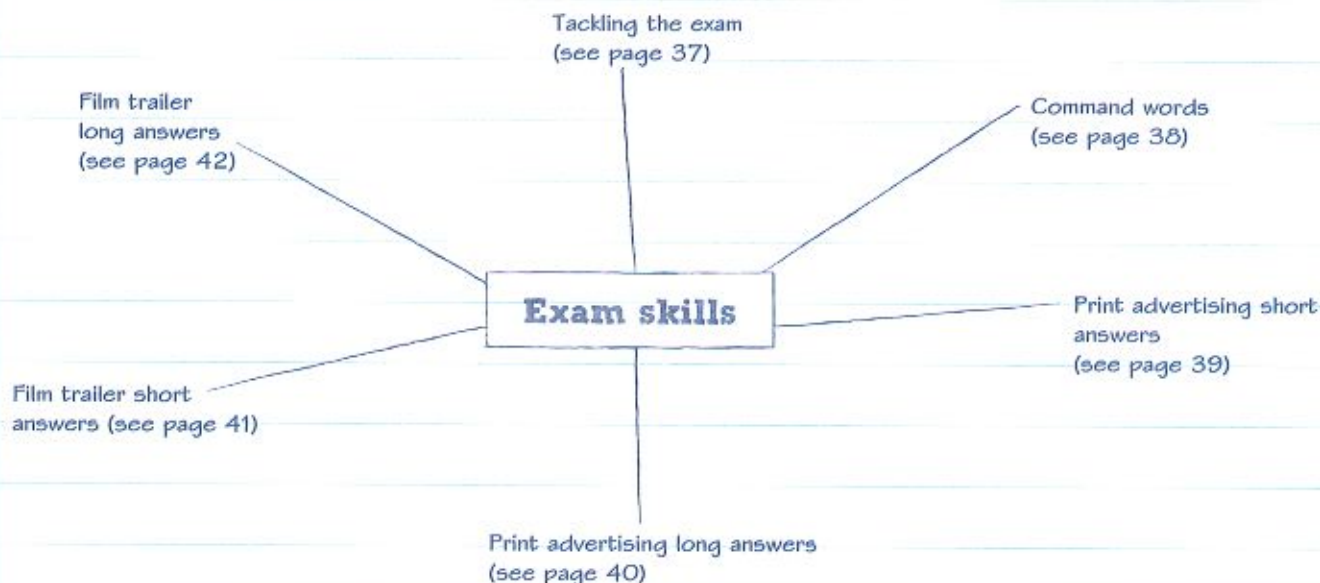
Now try this

Look at a UK news website, such as the BBC, the *Daily Mail* or *The Guardian*. Choose two news reports and evaluate how they reinforce, or challenge, dominant ideology.

Consider who is portrayed as having power, being weak, 'good', 'bad' and 'other'. How do the headlines, words and pictures work together to produce a particular response from the reader?

Your Unit 1 exam

Your Unit 1 exam will be set by Pearson and could cover any of the essential content in the unit. You can revise the unit content in this Revision Guide. This skills section is designed to **revise skills** that might be needed in your exam. The section uses selected content and outcomes to provide examples of ways of applying your skills.



Exam checklist

Before your exam, make sure you:

- ☒ have double-checked the time and date of your exam
- ☒ get a good night's sleep.

Check the Pearson website

The questions and sample response extracts in this section are provided to help you to revise content and skills. Ask your tutor or check the Pearson website for the most up-to-date **Sample Assessment Material** and **Mark Scheme** to get an indication of the structure of your actual paper and what this requires of you. The details of the actual exam may change so always make sure you are up to date.

Handwritten squiggle

Now try this

Visit the Pearson website and find the page containing the course materials for BTEC National Creative Digital Media Production. Look at the latest Unit 1 Sample Assessment Material (SAM) to get an indication of:

- the way the exam will look on screen
- whether an exam is in parts
- how much time is allowed and how many marks are allocated
- what types of questions appear on the exam.

Your tutor or instructor may already have provided you with a copy of the Sample Assessment Material. You can use these as a 'mock' exam to practise before taking your actual exam.

Tackling the exam

As well as revising the technical content in this book, you need to familiarise yourself with the likely format of the exam and how to give the best answers in the time available.

Answering the questions

- The exam requires both short and long answers.
- The number of marks available for each question will be shown in brackets. Use this as a guide for how much time to spend on each question.

Remember!

- ✓ It's about quality not quantity.
- ✓ The best answers focus clearly and concisely on the question.
- ✓ Writing down everything you can think of is not a good strategy.

What makes a good longer answer?

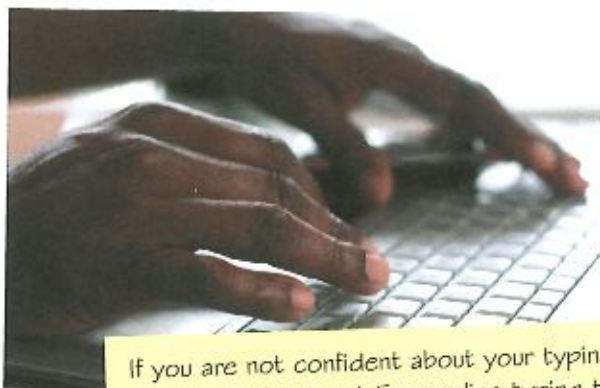
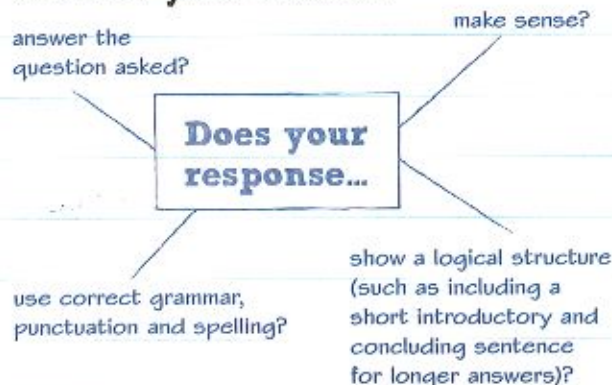
You are not being asked about your personal views on a topic – you will use your knowledge of media representation to evaluate the media product included in the exam. Consider how to show the following qualities in your answer.

- Structure your response logically and clearly.
- Present a well-developed argument using coherent chains of reasoning.
- Use media terminology accurately and consistently.
- Demonstrate a thorough awareness of competing arguments.
- Support all your judgements with evidence or relevant terminology.

Manage your time

- You will have a limited time to complete the exam. Plan your time carefully to ensure you can complete everything you need to within the allocated time. Check with your tutor or look at the latest Sample Assessment Material on the Pearson website for more information on how long you will have.
- Start by reading through the whole exam and identify which questions need more time.
- Remember that you need to assign time to watching any video clips.
- Assign a time limit for each question.
- Leave some time at the end to review your answers.

Re-read your answer



If you are not confident about your typing skills, practise beforehand. Free online typing tutorials help you type quickly but accurately.

What if you're stuck?

- Try to answer every question.
- You can go backwards and forwards through the questions. If you are stuck on one, go on to the next but remember to return to the question at the end.
- Sometimes taking a break or answering a different question helps you to think of a good answer.

Now try this

Visit the Pearson website and download the latest Sample Assessment Material. Complete this within the specified time, making sure you plan and carefully structure your answers. Afterwards, assess which aspects need more practice, for example assigning the correct time to longer answers.

Command words

Make sure you note the command word in the question, which may be highlighted in bold. It will give a clue to the sort of answer that is required and the level of detail you need to give.

Common command words

Examples of command words	What you need to do
Give	Provide one or more pieces of information.
Explain	Show understanding of the concept or topic being explained by giving reasons, examples and justifying your points.
Identify	Determine the key points of the topic.
Outline	Determine the key points, selecting and relaying information from a given stimulus or resource.
Analyse	Look at something methodically and in detail to explain and interpret it.
Compare	Compare the similarities and differences between techniques, theories, purposes and outcomes relating to different media representations.
Assess	Review information and bring it together, providing a balanced and reasoned argument that leads to a judgement or conclusion.
Evaluate	Provide evidence to show how far you support or disagree with an idea or statement, explaining what the most important factors are and why.
To what extent	Give clear details and evidence to support an opinion, showing how you have come to your conclusions.

Worked example

Explain the function of the establishing shot in the clip.

2 marks

Sample response extract

As it is a long shot of a small terraced house, the audience immediately knows where the action in the scene will take place and has an idea of the social status of the people in the house.

This question is testing your knowledge of the technical term 'establishing shot'. It asks you to 'explain', so you need to show you know the term and why it is important to the clip.

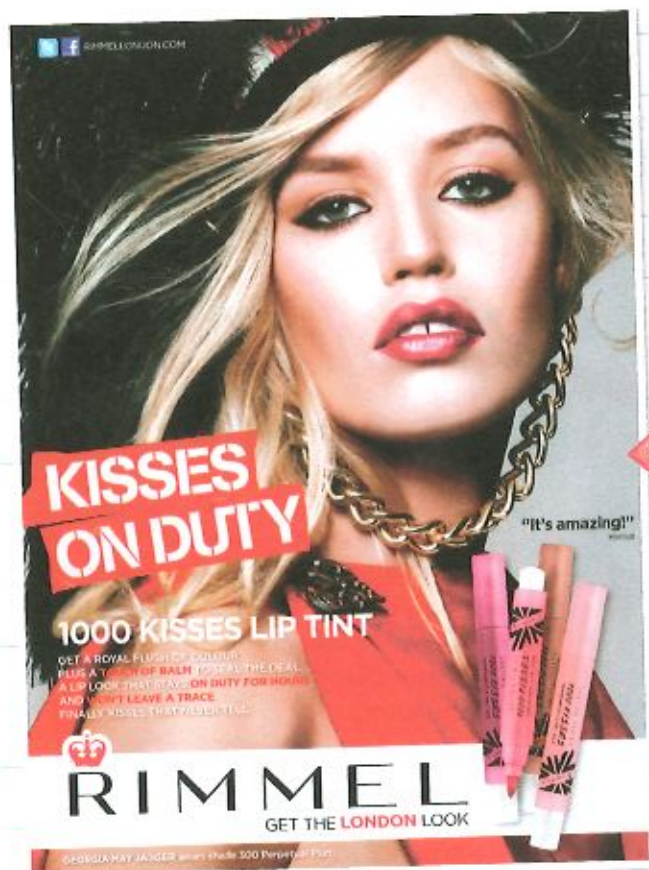
Now try this

Compare the representation of the main male and female characters in the last TV show you watched.

Include what they had in common and how they were different, and why this might be. Consider how they looked, what they said, where they went and how they behaved.

Print advertising short answers

In your exam, you will be asked questions about one or more examples of media products to demonstrate your understanding of media representation. Make sure you link your answers to the specific media products rather than responding in general terms.



Links You need to draw on your knowledge of representation in advertising to answer questions about this type of advert. You can revise how to approach this on page 3. You should also remind yourself about how the different elements of print media work together to have an impact on the audience. You can read about this on page 29.

Referring to Rimmel's advert for 1000 Kisses Lip Tint, consider:

- use of model
- which elements draw your eye
- hierarchy of typography
- what the words say
- use of colour
- why certain elements might have been included.

Worked example

Explain two examples of anchorage in this print advertisement.

4 marks

Sample response extract

The subheading '1000 Kisses Lip Tint' makes it clear that the advert is for lipstick rather than another type of cosmetics. This directs the focus to a second anchor, the model's lips, attaching meaning to them. The viewer is being directed to assume that the lips draw the eye because they have been enhanced with the lip tint.

You are being asked to demonstrate your understanding with examples, not just list them.

You must give two clear examples that demonstrate you know what the technical term means and how it can be applied to the media product.

Links On page 10, anchorage is described as 'directing the audience towards a desired outcome by attaching a meaning to something that could have many interpretations'.

Now try this

Explain **one** example of how colour has been used in this advert to create meaning.

Link the words, images and layout in answers to questions about visual elements.

Print advertising long answers

Refer to the print advertisement on the previous page when considering these questions. Read through these extracts from sample learner answers to understand what is required from different command words and the skills involved in structuring your responses.

Worked example

'This advertisement objectifies women.' To what extent do you agree with this statement?

12 marks

You are being asked 'To what extent' so you should give clear details and reasons for your response, using appropriate terminology. Provide evidence to support any opinion, view or argument, showing how far you agree or disagree with the statement.

Sample response extract

This advertisement objectifies women to a certain extent. Although it is aimed at young women who may buy and use the lip tint, the model is presented as the object of the male gaze, as a heterosexual man might view her. This is anchored to the text references to kissing, suggesting that women would only wear the product to gain the approval of men or to demonstrate their sexual availability rather than for their own sake. However, the model is staring confidently at the camera, rather than passively submitting to a man, implying that she has chosen to wear the lip tint and therefore has control over what may happen.



Links See page 33 for an explanation of objectification. You might also find it useful to revise audience positioning and the male gaze on page 9.

Structure your answer so that your opinion is clear from the start, and then back it up with evidence. Give both sides of the argument – first one and then the other – but discuss what you see as the strongest reasons first, showing your chains of reasoning and moving to a conclusion.

Worked example

Analyse how an audience might read the combination of context, layout, words and images to create meaning.

10 marks

You are being asked to break the advert down, look at it methodically in detail, and interpret how each part contributes to the overall meaning.

Sample response extract

This print advert is likely to appear in women's magazines, which will focus on fashion and beauty and appeal to the product's target audience. The audience will decode the advert in this context, and expect it to continue that theme. The close-up photograph of the model dominates the top half of the page, with the focus on her red lips. The red colour is echoed in the headline, 'Kisses On Duty', which reinforces the importance of the lips in the image. This is further reinforced by the subheading, '1000 Kisses Lip Tint', which in turn links to the image of the lip tint packaging. We therefore assume that the packaging shown is the product being advertised and has been used on the model's lips...

Use relevant terminology in your answer.

Structure your answer so that it shows the interrelationship of the different parts. In this case, it begins with an overview of the advert in context, then focuses on the main image and how this links to other elements of the advert. It concentrates on the use of colour and how this links to the meaning of the words, remembering that the purpose of the advertisement is to encourage the target audience to buy the product.

Now try this

Continue answering the question by covering other elements that have not yet been analysed.

You could analyse the use of text only in the bottom half of the photo, the effect of celebrity and customer endorsement, and how the text implies the lip tint is long-lasting.

Film trailer short answers

Film is an example of a typical media product. Here are some examples of skills involved in 'short-answer' responses to a trailer.



Watch the trailer for the British action film *Vendetta* (2013).

Watch the clip here



The diagram on page 2 gives you a framework for analysing representation in film and TV.

A trailer is an advertisement for a film. It is edited to convey enough information about the film to persuade audiences to see it. It is designed to give a taste of the film without giving too much away. Revise representations in advertising on page 3.

Worked example

Identify the type of camera shot used in this still image from the trailer.

1 mark

Sample response extract

Overhead shot.



You can revise camera positioning on page 16.

The first question uses the term 'identify', so requires only a technical term in relation to the image from the trailer.

Worked example

Explain why it has been used.

2 marks

Sample response extract

The angle directly over the action shows several characters at once, highlighting the vulnerability of the couple lying on the floor and the inappropriate behaviour of their torturers (for example, one man is smiling and another is taking a photo on his phone).

The second question is where you can go into more detail about the effect of the shot that has been used. If you struggle to identify its significance, consider how it produces a different effect from other shots (in this case, over the shoulder or close-up), showing your understanding.

Worked example

Explain how the *mise-en-scène* represents the main character in this shot.

4 marks

Sample response extract

He is alone on a station platform. The colour and lights of the approaching train contrast with his dark clothes and sombre expression, reinforcing his isolation...



You can revise camera positioning on page 16.

Now try this

Continue answering the question above, explaining in particular how setting could represent the sense we get of this character.



Film trailer long answers

Refer to the film trailer on the previous page when considering these questions and the skills involved in responding to the command words and in structuring a longer answer.

Worked example

Analyse the conventions that define this film's genre.

10 marks

Sample response extract

This trailer conforms very closely to the conventions of an action thriller. It begins with a series of jump cuts to establish the main character alone in an urban setting: London after the sun has gone down. The darkness immediately gives a sense of foreboding and threat.

A voiceover introduces the idea of fighting for a cause. Further jump cuts and dialogue include many more action film conventions, such as establishing a motive for the hero's actions following the torture and possible murder of his parents, fire and explosions, weapons (guns and a knife), fights and violence, and the depiction of authority figures (senior officials and police officers) in opposition to criminals on the streets.

The heavy bass in the soundtrack increases in speed and volume as the trailer goes on, creating a sense of excitement and adrenaline...

Links Remember, generic codes and conventions create audience expectations and guide their reactions to the media. See page 14 for more details about genres and subgenres.

This question is asking you to define the trailer's genre and analyse how it conforms to the expected conventions of that genre.

The trailer offers many examples of its genre conventions but remember that a detailed and methodical analysis is required to break the conventions down and interpret the interrelationship between them. This answer starts by defining the genre and then offers examples from the start of the trailer onwards.

Ideas are presented through sustained references to the trailer, and media terminology is used appropriately.

The answer doesn't just look at what's happening but also how it is presented, such as the style of editing, the use of darkness and the insistent soundtrack.

Worked example

Evaluate the possible effects on society of the representations shown in this trailer.

20 marks

Sample response extract

Class stereotypes are strongly represented in the *mise en scène* of this trailer and the film as a whole. In line with Dyer's theory, differences are exaggerated and over-simplified – those in authority speak with public school accents and dress smartly, while the criminals speak with strong working-class London accents and dress casually. While the officials talk, the gangsters take matters into their own hands, which could provoke copy-cat behaviour in those who feel that 'justice' cannot be met using official channels...

Links Use pages 8–12 to revise media theories that could be relevant to this question.

This question requires you to evaluate the possible effects of the media on society, using appropriate media theories such as stereotyping or audience positioning. The extract uses clear examples of class stereotypes to make a wider point about how they could influence real-life behaviour.

Links The answer could also cover how far the trailer reinforces the dominant ideology. See page 35 for more about this.

Now try this

Continue answering the question above, ensuring you come to a well-reasoned conclusion.

You could consider the portrayal of women and the male gaze, the representation of 'good' and 'bad', and the effect of glamorising violence.