Zig Zag Education

2017 specification first exams in 2019

Topic on a Page for GCSE Media Studies

Theoretical Perspectives

AQA | Eduqas | OCR | WJEC

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Contents

Mind Maps
1. Semiotics
2. Narrative
3. Genre
4. Versions of Reality
5. Identities and Subcultures
6. Audience Interpretation
7. Audience Pleasure and Interactivity

All of the above are supplied as Summary Pages and Activity Sheets in both A3 and A4 formats

Teacher's Introduction

This resource is primarily intended to be used during revision by students studying GCSE Media Studies. Across all GCSE specifications, it is important for students to have a good knowledge of theoretical perspectives; this knowledge will enable them to analyse media texts with more confidence and support their arguments in their written exams. It is also likely that students will be asked exam questions which relate directly to a specific theorist or theoretical perspective. This resource is designed to ensure students have all the knowledge they need to excel in these areas of their exams.

As a revision tool that focuses on a fairly specific aspect of media studies, this resource is comprehensive and thorough in the knowledge it imparts. It offers key terminology, background information on theorists, explanations of the key ideas of theorists, and a series of examples to demonstrate how these perspectives can be applied to the analysis of texts. It presents this information in the form of visual 'mind maps' so it is not overwhelming for students to approach. It is especially suited to visual learners, and those who find it difficult to revise solely from written notes.

The resource is intended to be applicable to all GCSE specifications, i.e. Eduqas, AQA, OCR and WJEC. Therefore, an effort has been made to approach the topic as generally as possible.

The relevant information has been broken down into **seven** topics:
1. Semiotics *(Media Language)*
2. Narrative *(Media Language)*
3. Genre *(Media Language)*
4. Versions of Reality *(Media Representation)*
5. Identities and Subcultures *(Media Representation)*
6. Audience Interpretation *(Media Audiences)*
7. Audience Pleasure and Interactivity *(Media Audiences)*

The resource consists of:

- Seven completed mind maps, which provide solutions to the activity mind maps, labelled (1) to (7)

- Seven activity mind maps (partially complete) for students to complete, labelled: (1) to (7)

All mind maps are provided in A3 and A4 formats.

How to use this resource:
- The sheets can be handed out at the end of the course, or at the end of each topic for revision purposes.
- The mind maps can be printed out in poster size and displayed on the classroom walls for students to reference, so they can constantly reference relevant theoretical perspectives as they analyse and evaluate specific media products.
- The resource also includes partially completed mind maps. Students could be encouraged to complete the exercises as a way of recapping knowledge from the topic at the end of teaching.

J Kelly, September 2020

Update v1.1, October 2024
Removed erroneous photographs from Poster 3

SEMIOTICS

MEDIA LANGUAGE
Theoretical Perspectives

The study of **media language** looks at the ways in which the mass media communicates messages to an audience – media products successfully communicate these messages by establishing a language that audiences can understand.

The process by which media products 'speak' to audiences can be broken down into three stages:

1. Sender → 2. Message → 3. Receiver

With certain forms such as live television, radio and online media, this is a rapid (often immediate) process of communication:

1. BBC → 2. *Strictly Come Dancing* final → 3. All viewers of the episode

1. YouTube vlogger → 2. Live stream apology → 3. Vlogger's followers on social media

With other forms such as film and print media, the process of communication tends to be more gradual:

1. Warner Bros. → 2. *Joker* (film) → 3. People who watch the film on DVD

Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913)

- A Swiss linguist who is often credited as the father of **semiotics**
- Through studying linguistics, Saussure proposed that the meaning conveyed through language is governed by a combination of **rules**
- He held that a sign is the most basic unit for measuring **meaning**, and that each sign is made up of two elements:
  1. **Signifier** – the form of a sign; something which can be seen, heard, smelt, touched or tasted.
  2. **Signified** – the idea or meaning that is conveyed by the signifier. E.g. A rose can signify <u>love</u>.

> 'Without language, thought is a vague, uncharted nebula'

In this quote, Saussure demonstrates that language uses a system of rules which enables us to communicate our thoughts and feelings to one another – thoughts are too 'vague' to be communicated without this structure

Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914)

- An American scientist, philosopher and linguistic theorist
- He proposed that **signifiers** can be separated into three different categories:
  1. **Icon** – a signifier which holds physical similarities with the object it signifies and resembles what it stands for; therefore, minimal interpretation is required
  2. **Index** – a signifier which has some physical or literal connection to what is being signified, although there is no direct resemblance
  3. **Symbol** – a signifier which bears no physical or literal resemblance to what is being signified; the meaning it conveys is a culturally accepted convention that must be learnt

Icon for a telephone

Index for rain

Symbol for music

Roland Barthes (1915-1980)

- A French theorist and semiotician who was heavily inspired by the theories of Saussure
- He suggested that there are **five codes** that producers employ in their media texts – these codes create signs which an audience can then interpret. These codes are often used in **narratives** to help readers make sense of what is happening:

BARTHES also built on Saussure's theory by suggesting that there is a two-stage process to identifying the meaning of a sign:

- <u>Stage 1 - Denotation:</u> The literal meaning of a sign or symbol
- <u>Stage 2 - Connotation:</u> The meanings audiences connect with the sign or symbol based on their own broader experiences and knowledge of the world

Code	Definition	Examples
①	An object or event, often very	• A gun being shot in a crime drama
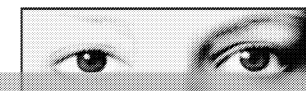
Example - *The Silence of the Lambs* poster

A Bulgarian-French philosopher and **structuralist** literary critic who studied classic folk stories and **fairy tales**

He proposed that **narratives** could be broken down into five key stages and that these stages were repeated across all **chronological** narratives

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Todorov ~~~ sometimes criticised as it can only be applied to **closed narratives** – there are many media texts w~~~ ~~~ at least one of the key stages
- Todorov believed ~~~ characters are central to narrative develop~~~ key characters are changed throughout the co~~~ a narrative, something that becomes clear in the re~~~ition stage

Tzvetan Todorov
(1939–2017)

TODOROV – FIVE STAGE~~~

❶ **Equilibrium:** The opening of the narrative in which there is a state of balance. The world is introduced through **exposition**, and there is no major conflict bet~~~ characters.
❷ **Disruption/complication:** The point at which the state of balance ~~~ disturbed by a key action or event
❸ **Recognition:** The point at which the protagonist acknowledges the disruption of balance and begins a quest to restore it
❹ **Resolution:** The characters attempt to solve the conflict and restore so~~~ ~~~ of balance
❺ **New equilibrium:** The conflict has been resolved and a new equilibrium ~~~ ~~~ablished

AUDIENCE APPEAL OF NARRATIVE

Enigma – the tension of not knowing what will happen next

Clos~~~ – ~~~e satisfaction of seeing equilibrium restored

Narrative	Definition	Film/TV example
Linear	The events are told/presented in chronological order	The war film *1917* creates the illusion of one continuous take – we follow the characters on a journey in real time

NARRATIVE

MEDIA LANGUAGE
Theoretical Perspectives

Story vs Narrative

Story – refers simply to a sequence of events as they happened

Narrative – refers to the way in which this sequence is constructed as well as how the events are positioned in relation to each other for the audience

Simple tricks to differentiate between story and narrative:

- If you reshuffle the sequence of events, the story is still the same, but you end up with a new narrative
- Narratives are concerned with: causality (why is this happening?); time (when is this happening?); space (where is this happening?)

The difference can be further explored using two newspaper headlines covering the same event:

THERE IS ONE STORY – On 12th December 2019, the British people voted in a general election. It was revealed the next morning that Boris Johnson's Conservative government had won 365 seats compared to Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party which won only 202. That day, both leaders publicly reflected on the results of the election.

But there are multiple narratives. How does each paper choose to

STORY = CHARACTER
In some of the most effective narratives, it is the actions of characters that drive the narrative

- Like Todorov (see left), **Vladimir Propp** believed that narratives are driven by the actions of characters
- Propp's work was derived from his studies of Russian folk tales and their characters. In his book *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928), Propp classified characters into eight different categories
- These different character types are defined by the specific purpose they serve in a narrative

Vladimir Propp
(~~~95–1970)

Hero – The protagonist of the story. Embarks upon a journey motivated by the lack or loss of something.

Villain – Antagonistic character who wants to prevent the hero from completing their journey

Princess – Acts as the object of the hero's desire. They are usually acquired by the hero at the end of the story. Also referred to as the **reward.**

Dispatcher – Sends the hero on a journey and illustrates the importance of that journey

Donor – Provides the hero with either an object or the advice they need to complete their journey

Princess's father – Presents the hero with the reward/princess at the end of the journey

Helper – Aids the hero on their journey. Often referred to as a **sidekick.**

False hero – Raises complications or tries to take credit for the hero's actions in order to obtain the reward
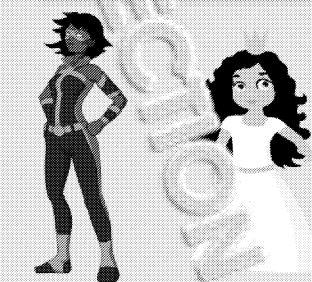
Hero

Prince~~~

Villain

Helper

ⓘ It is worth noting that different character types can overlap in certain stories, *e.g. a single character might send the hero on their journey and reward them when they return. This character would effectively act as the dispatcher and the princess's father*

GENRE THEORY — Steven Neale (1958–)

- The key to genre is not just **repetition** but also **variation**

- Repetition satisfies an audience, to an extent, but it is more interesting for audiences when difference comes into play and their expectations are **subverted**

- Neale applied this model to **Hollywood** cinema and proposed that a film's genre can be defined by the extent to which it embraces the codes, conventions and **stereotypes** of the genre

- He also proposed, however, that films will subvert certain conventions and stereotypes so the film can differentiate itself from previous genre entries and not be considered an exact **copy** of a previous film

Industry angle – It is widely understood that media producers rely on genres to ensure high audience engagement and to maximise profit.
+ There is a philosophy of: 'If they like that product, they'll like this similar one as well'.

Neale also argues that genres **evolve** over time and change depending on the demands of contemporary audiences, meaning genres have to change in order to remain **culturally relevant** and appropriately matched to contemporary values and beliefs.

THE FLUIDITY OF GENRE

Intertextuality – when a media text makes reference to another media text. These references can be verbal or visual.

The way in which the genre of a media text is classified depends on the media form:

Media form	Video games	Newspapers	Film	Online media
Genre examples	Platform Shooter Stealth Logic Role-playing	Tabloid Broadsheet Freesheet Local Alt-weekly	Horror Coming-of-age Science fiction Western Crime	Social network Discussion forum Vlogs Content sharing Sharing economy
Mode of classification	Allocated based on the function of the gameplay *i.e. how the player interacts with the game*	Originally allocated based on size (tabloid/broadsheet) – now allocated based on circulation figure, frequency of publication and target audience	Allocated based on content i.e. plot, character types, music, iconography – basically, what happens and how it happens	Allocated based on function and purpose as opposed to content, *i.e. how the audience interacts with the site*

Why genres appeal to audiences

Audiences enjoy having their expectations met – genres offer comfort and familiarity

It is easy for audiences to select the media they want to consume based on their existing knowledge of genres

It is easier to identify meaning in a media text with a contextual knowledge of the genre

When audiences have a strongly cultivated knowledge of a particular genre, it can be satisfying when a text within that genre subverts expectations

Why genres appeal to producers

- Producers can quickly gain an understanding of how to construct content in a way that has proven audience appeal

- Genres provide a quick and easy way of categorising audiences and targeting them effectively

- Genres allow producers to hire skilled personnel who have specific skills relative to that genre

- Tried-and-tested formulas offer a financial safety net

- Certain stars and directors prefer to work within one specific genre – this simplifies the selection process for cast and crew

- Creates clear channels of distribution for media texts that fall under the same category as previously successful media texts

- Previously successful media texts within the same genre can be used to inspire marketing strategies

Subgenres can be defined as smaller categories within a larger, 'parent' genre. By breaking down a broad genre into smaller parts, the niche interests of audiences can be appealed to with more precision.

Form	Parent genre	Subgenres

GENRE

MEDIA LANGUAGE
Theoretical Perspectives

Genre provides us with a clear way of categorising media products based on their **form, style and content**

Form – the type of media text being used to convey meaning

Style – the way in which a media text is presented

Content – what happens in a story and the meaning behind it

The genre of a media text can be identified by looking at its codes and conventions and by relating them to other media texts. The repetition of these codes and conventions creates a framework that audiences then become familiar with.

Examples of these codes and conventions in action

We can tell Andrés Muschietti's *It* (2017) is a horror film based on the following codes and conventions:
- Character types – a killer clown; a murderer; scared children
- Story Beats – killer stalking victim; nightmare sequences; jump scares
- Technical Codes – rapid editing; low-key lighting; haunting soundtrack

VERSIONS OF REALITY

Media Representation Theoretical Perspectives

- **Media representation** is all about the way in which producers choose to portray people, groups, events or ideas in a media text
- Reality is complex, so representing every single aspect of life, with sufficient depth, in a single media text is impossible
- Therefore, producers consciously establish a target audience and represent aspects of reality in a way that this audience can relate to
- In doing so, producers construct a **version of reality** for this particular audience, as opposed to a reflection of reality itself

USEFUL TIP

Think of representation as 'representation' – rather than presenting audiences with reality, media texts take aspects of reality and manipulate them (sometimes very subtly) before presenting them to audiences

Producers pick and choose what they want to represent in a text through a process of **selection**, **construction** and **mediation**

Selection ⟹ The process of choosing and excluding elements in order to piece together a media product

Construction ⟹ The process by which different aspects of a media text

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Hall suggested that **stereotyping** is often used in the mainstream media

Stuart Hall (1932–2014)

Hall was a cultural theorist who highlighted how representation in media texts can create meaning through language – *not just through spoken/written language but through the system of signs and codes explored in the **table below***

Stereotype – representation that reduces a person or group to a narrow set of traits and characteristics
Example – mainstream cinema has historically represented Arabian people as villains and fools

⟱

It is important to consider that contemporary media products (like many you will be studying) use **countertypes** in order to promote a more tolerant and progressive society

⟱

Countertype – representation that emphasises the positive attributes of a person or group, often combating stereotypes in the process
Example – the video game industry is making an effort to put more female characters at the centre of action adventure games, particularly as many mainstream video games have represented women as damsels in distress, sex objects and victims of violence in the past

The selection and combination of **technical**, **visual**, **verbal** and **audio** codes has an effect on representation and the way the viewer should feel

Code	Example
Written text	Newspapers such as *The Sun* and *Daily Mail* use verbal codes like wordplay and alliteration to negatively represent left-wing politicians, e.g. the headlines 'Court Jezter' and 'Jezza's Jihadi Comrades' to describe Jeremy Corbyn
Camera shots and angles	A dangerous gangster in a television show might be introduced in a low-angle shot to make them look bigger – they are represented as being powerful and threatening

---

The construction of **stereotypes** in the mainstream media usually occurs because of the people who hold power within the industry. We might describe the producers and entrepreneurs who create stereotypes in order to maintain **cultural hegemony*** as the **in-groups**. In turn, the **social groups** who are misrepresented by these industries (ethnic minorities, the homeless) might be described as **out-groups**.

'OTHERING'

Hall suggested that **in-groups** effectively prioritise the representations of certain people, groups and ideas at the expense of others (**out-groups**).

A key example would be the prominence of straight, white-skinned, **male** heroes in media narratives throughout history – this has resulted in the **'othering'** of homosexuals and the **BAME (black, asian, and minority ethnic)** community, among other groups.

***Cultural hegemony:** the widespread promotion of ideas and beliefs which are valued by the most powerful individuals in society*

David Buckingham (1954–)

- A theorist who specialises in the relationship young people (particularly children) have with the media and new technologies
- He proposed that children do not have rigid identities; rather, their identities change as they interact more and more with television shows, websites and video games, among other forms
- He proposes that children construct their identities based on the many representations they see in the media, *e.g. young girls might feel like they have to be skinny and wear a lot of make-up because of the female 'role*

Media Representation Theoretical Perspectives

In order to study representation, we must look at 'who' the media is representing on a regular basis
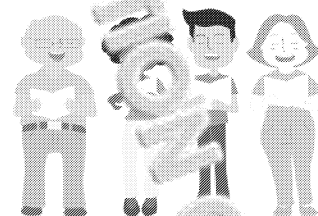
Individuals – whenever a person is featured, or even referenced, in a media text, that person is being **represented**. It is common for individuals to be depicted in a way that reduces them to a simplistic character type, *e.g. the hero, the villain, the fool*. It is often the case that, by constructing a representation of an individual, a media text is also representing whatever **social group** or subculture that individual belongs to.

For example:
In the film *Get Out* (2017), one could argue that the lead character's story **represents** the experiences of many black men living in America
When Meghan Markle received criticism in the tabloid press, many believed them to be constructing a deliberately negative representation of BAME women in general

Listed below are the six key social groups you are most likely to consider when talking about media representation:

Gender	Male, Female, Non-binary
Age	Over 60s, Teenagers, Children
Social class	Elite, Traditional working class
Sexuality	Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual
Ethnicity	Caucasian, Black, Chinese
Religion	Muslim, Christian, Hindu

Use the acronym GASSER to help you remember them

Subculture – a cultural group defined by specific ideas or interests which differentiate them from the mainstream. They might also be subject to representation. Examples can be found below:

Vegans	Punks	Nudists	Drag queens	Skinheads	Riot grrrls
Nerds	Hippies	Goths	Emos	Rude boys	Metalheads

When discussing representation, it is important to differentiate between **objective groups** and **subjective groups**. The latter mode of classification is often used in an insulting way.

Objective groups	Groups that are defined based on facts and scientific reasoning	Men, BAME, Mothers
Subjective groups	Groups that are defined based on different people's opinions and interpretations	Chavs, Feminazis, Toffs

Social groups – every single person fits into a multitude of social groups: A person might belong to a particular group on the basis of their background or identity. They might also belong to a group on the basis of their values, beliefs and characteristics.

EVENTS

Media texts that make reference to real-life events can often display ideology in how they choose to depict these events. This is determined by the processes of **selection** and **mediation** in which certain aspects of the event are emphasised while others are omitted.

Example: Following the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower in 2017, left-wing publications such as the *Daily Mirror* and *The Guardian* were among the first to suggest that the Conservative Party's austerity measures had led to the tragedy. Right-wing publications such as the *Daily Express* and the *Daily Mail* were less quick to assign blame.

LOCATIONS

Certain media texts will aim to represent a particular place in a certain way, whether that be a house or an entire country. This representation will often depend on the producer's **point of view** and the effect they want the text to have on the target audience.

Example: The producers of a property programme such as *Location, Location, Location* will construct a representation of a mansion to make it look as appealing to live in as possible. The same mansion could be shot by a horror film director to make it look terrifying.

ISSUES AND IDEAS

Media texts also display ideologies in how they choose to depict social and political issues. The representations found in these texts often reflect the **bias** of the producers, even if the text was not intended to be making a sociopolitical statement.

GENDER THEORY

Gender has been, perhaps, the most widely discussed issue of media representation throughout history. You will need to be particularly familiar with theoretical perspectives on gender and feminist theory.

Stuart Hall – Theory of Stereotyping

Hall suggested that **stereotyping** is often used in the mainstream media to draw lines between men and women by reducing them to a series of simplistic traits and characteristics
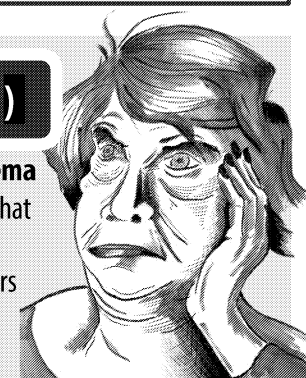
Masculine stereotypes in the media

THE MALE GAZE

- Mulvey is a British **feminist** theorist who studied the representation of women in mainstream **cinema**
- In her book *Visual and Other Pleasures,* Mulvey suggested that visual media is constructed in a way that caters specifically to the pleasure of male, **heterosexual** viewers
- This theory explains the various ways in which women's bodies have been **objectified** over the years
- Mulvey's theory supports the idea that women are often represented as **passive objects**, as opposed to **active subjects**

Laura Mulvey (1941—)

AUDIENCE INTERPRETATION
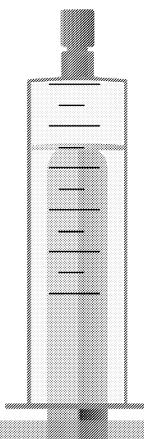
Media Audiences
Theoretical Perspectives

Debate has raged over the years as to whether audiences are active or passive

Active audience: an audience that actively selects the types of media product they consume. They are also able to actively engage and interpret messages within a media text, applying different readings to different messages.

Passive audience: an audience that consumes various types of media without actively engaging with the content or messages. They are also happy to accept the meaning of a media product on the most basic and superficial level. They are a **mass**, as opposed to a collection of individuals.

THE HYPODERMIC NEEDLE THEORY

- This model, also known as 'the magic **bullet**', was originated in Harold Lasswell's book *Propaganda Technique in the World War,* published in **1927**
- The idea was that media texts, like needles, inject ideas and messages into the **minds** of their audience who are, in turn, **powerless** to reject these messages
- This theory was particularly accepted in the 1940s and 1950s – a period in which media forms such as **radio** and television were described as 'plug-in **drugs**'
- This theory is now widely considered to be **outdated** and patronising to audiences
- There are, however, more recent examples of people buying into this theory, *e.g.*

STUART HALL – RECEPTION THEORY

In addition to his theories on **representation**, Stuart Hall also proposed ideas on how audiences actually receive and **interpret** texts:

- It is widely agreed that producers **encode** messages into media texts in order to invoke a particular response from the audience
- The audience, in turn, will **decode** these messages. Hall suggested that audiences will not always interpret these messages in the way the producer intended.
- He proposed that audiences could interpret messages in **three** general ways

Stuart Hall (1932–2014)

Preferred reading – the audience responds to a media text in the way the producer intended. They take the **dominant reading** of the text and interpret the codes as the producer intended.

Negotiated reading – the audience **agrees with some** of the messages encoded but **not all**, due to the decoder's own individual experience or context. The audience will challenge the ideas that they disagree with and accept the ideas that they agree with.

Oppositional reading – the audience completely **rejects** the messages encoded by the media producer

The two-step flow model

One of the earliest theories to reject the idea of a totally 'passive' audience

The theory suggests that messages and ideologies are passed on from mass media producers to mass audiences **through** opinion leaders who act as a 'middle man'

For example, a person's interpretation of a sitcom might be affected if their friend comes in and says 'this programme isn't funny, it's just offensive' – they are influencing the person's reading

Particularly with the invention of online and participatory media, it is generally more accepted now that audiences are active rather than passive

The interpretations made by audiences might depend on a number of factors relating to their identity or interests:

Factor	Example
Gender	A woman might take an **oppositional reading** of a film with no female characters
Age	An 85-year-old might take a **oppositional reading** of a video game such as Call of Duty for the way in which World War II is represented
Ethnicity	A black woman might take a **preferred reading** of a magazine that hires black cover stars
Culture	Someone of Mexican heritage might enjoy seeing their culture represented in the film *Coco*. However, they might think of the film as an overly Westernised representation, resulting in a **negotiated reading**.

Be careful not to generalise when you talk about how different **demographics** might respond to a particular text. For example, it was long assumed by producers that women prefer to consume media that explores subjects such as fashion, make-up and relationships. As discussions regarding gender have developed, these assumptions are now considered to be overly simplistic and outdated.

- Stuart Hall used this theory to consider the ways in which producers try to ensure a **preferred** reading from their audience
- The messages and ideas in a media text will often be constructed in a way that establishes a particular **point of view**
- For example, if a television show features a voice-over narration from a particular character, the producers are often aligning the audience with this particular character's point of view. This process is known as **audience positioning**

AUDIENCE PLEASURE AND INTERACTIVITY

Media Audiences
Theoretical Perspectives

| Need	Explanation	Examples
Entertainment and diversion	The need for audiences to pass time **or** to relax and experience escapism from the stresses of daily life	**Action films** such as *Avengers: Endgame* allow audiences to 'escape' from the boredom and stress of daily life Someone might read a **culture magazine** to keep them entertained in an airport
Education and information	The need for audiences to develop their knowledge and learn about the world on both a local and an international scale	**Local newspapers** inform audiences as to what is going on in their local community Someone might watch a **TV documentary** to improve their knowledge of a niche subject
Personal identity	The need for audiences to have their own sense of self affirmed – they might identify with a particular situation or character in a media text	Someone might style and conduct themselves based on a **music video star** they admire Many audiences listen to **YouTube vloggers** because they can personally relate to the topics and experiences discussed
Social interaction	The need for audiences to communicate and form relationships with others – audiences can interact while consuming certain texts; others can inspire conversation	Contemporary audiences can now speak to each other and discuss strategy through headsets while playing certain **video games** (e.g. Call of Duty and Fortnite) Continuous **television programmes** such as *Love Island* encourage audiences to discuss the show between episodes

THE USES AND GRATIFICATIONS MODEL

- This model was originally proposed by Jay **Blumler** and Elihu **Katz** in **1974**
- These theorists developed the model based on the idea that media audiences are not **passive** – rather, their ability to **select** what media they consume, based on their own needs and desires, makes them **active**
- To a large degree, this theory **empowers** audiences – it suggests that media producers must acknowledge the requirements of an audience and fulfil these requirements
- If they fail to do so, their products will be left without an **audience**

The approach of the uses and gratifications model is built upon five ideas:

1. Audiences actively consume media texts in order to achieve goals and experience specific pleasures
2. The value of a media text is entirely subjective and is determined solely by the audience
3. Audiences are able to identify the gratifications they receive when they consume particular genres of media, *e.g. tabloid newspapers, documentaries*
4. Media producers compete with each other in order to ensure audience satisfaction
5. Mass media producers are heavily influenced by audience feedback – this determines how they approach the construction of future texts

Elihu Katz (1926–)
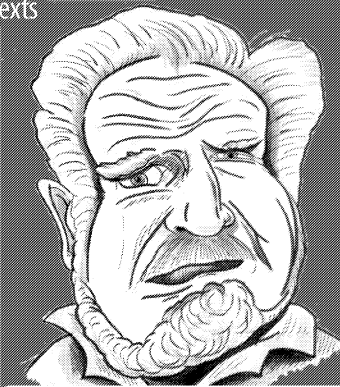
Jay Blumler (1924–)

INTERACTION
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CREATOR AND CONSUMER

Simple audience – the people who experience a piece of art, culture or entertainment directly, in person, *e.g. theatre, live concert, sports event*

Mass Audience – The people who consume traditional media products *e.g. Newspapers, Film, Television, Radio*

Diffused audience – the people who use digital technology, *e.g. video games, online, social and participatory media*. This kind of audience will often try to maintain constant access to the media.
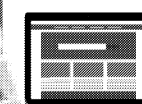
THE INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Modern Internet (Web 2.0) and social media sites – Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat – allow audience members to interact directly with creators and media companies.

- Many major media companies will promote material (releasing teaser trailers on YouTube, live-streaming on Instagram, etc.) as a form of marketing that audience members and Internet users can immediately and publicly respond to.
- Interactions online between fan and creator can be much more personal and conversational compared to the traditional methods of audience interaction.

VARIOUS FORMS OF AUDIENCE PLEASURE

Aesthetic pleasure – the sensation of consuming a visually beautiful or artfully...

Catharsis – the sensation of consuming media that triggers a release of repressed...

Cerebral pleasure – when something in a media text has been constructed to be intellectually satisfying for an audience

Vicarious pleasure – the sensation of enjoying another person's experiences as you view them

Visceral pleasure – when something has been constructed to provide the audience with physical...

Voyeuristic pleasure – the sensation of watching or witnessing something in a media text that is forbidden or unknown by others

Various other ways in which audiences can be interactive

Create a blog

SEMIOTICS

MEDIA LANGUAGE
Theoretical Perspectives

The study of **media language** looks at the ways in which the mass media communicates messages to an audience – media products successfully communicate these messages by establishing a language that audiences can understand.

1. The process by which media products 'speak' to audiences can be broken down into which three stages?

☐ → ☐ → ☐

2. Give examples of two media forms in which this process of **communication is rapid**

☐ → ☐ → ☐
☐ → ☐ → ☐

3. Give examples of two media forms in which this process of communication is more gradual

☐ → ☐ → ☐
☐ → ☐ → ☐

4. What name is given to this process of communication?

Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913)

A Swiss linguist who is often credited as the father of _____ Through studying linguistics, Saussure proposed that the meaning conveyed through language is governed by a combination of _____ He held that a sign is the most basic unit for measuring _____, and that each sign is made up of two elements:

1. _____ – the form of a sign; something which can be seen, heard, smelt, touched or _____
2. _____ – the idea or meaning that is conveyed by the signifier

8. Fill in the gaps using the words provided –
semiotics, rules, meaning, signifier, signified

'Without language, thought is a vague, uncharted nebula'

In this quote, Saussure demonstrates that language uses a system of rules which enables us to communicate our thoughts and feelings to one another – thoughts are too 'vague' to be communicated without this structure

Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914)

- An American scientist, philosopher and linguistic theorist
- He proposed that **signifiers** can be separated into three different categories:

9. Provide definitions for the following three types of signifier

. **Icon** –

. **Index** –

. **Symbol** –

10. Illustrate examples for the following three types of signifier

➤ Icon for a telephone

➤ Index for rain

➤ Symbol for music

Roland Barthes (1915-1980)

- A French theorist and semiotician who was heavily inspired by the theories of Saussure
- He suggested that there are five codes that producers employ in their media texts – these codes create signs which an audience can then interpret. These codes are often used in **narratives** to help readers make sense of what is happening.

11. Fill in the empty boxes in the table below

Code	Definition	Examples

12. Provide definitions for the terms 'denotation' and 'connotation'

BARTHES also built on Saussure's theory by suggesting that there is a two-stage process to identifying the meaning of a sign:

Stage 1 – Denotation

Stage 2 – Connotation

Example – *The Silence of the Lambs* poster

NARRATIVE

MEDIA LANGUAGE
Theoretical Perspectives
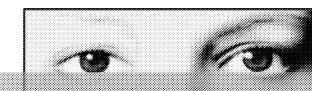
A Bulgarian-French philosopher and _____ literary critic who studied classic folk stories and _____

He proposed that _____ could be broken down into five key stages and that these stages were repeated across all _____ narratives

1. Fill in the gaps using the words provided – **structuralist, fairy tales, narratives, chronological, closed narratives, resolution**

Tzvetan Todorov (1939–2017)

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Todorov's th_____ ometimes criticised as it can only be applied to _____ – there are many media texts which _____ one of the key stages
- Todorov believed that characters are central to narrative development – key characters are changed throughout the course of a narrative _____ mething that becomes clear in the _____ st_____

2. Iden_____ e name given to each of the fol_____ ing narrative stages

TODOROV – FIVE STAGES

_____ : The opening of the narrative in _____ there is a state of balance. The world is introduced _____ rough **exposition**, and there is no major conflict between _____ acters.

_____ : The point at which the state of bala_____ disturbed by a key action or event

_____ : The point at which the protagonist ac_____ edges the disruption of balance and begins a que_____ to restore it

_____ : The characters attempt to solve the confli_____ restore some kind of balance

_____ : The conflict has been resolved and a new equilibrium is established

3. Identify two ways in which narrative appeals to audie_____

AUDIENCE APPEAL OF NARRATIVE →

4. Fill in the empty boxes in the table below

Narrative	Definition	Film/TV example
		The war film *1917* creates the illusion of one

5. Briefly explain the difference between a **story** and a **narrative**

6. In no more than 100 words, describe an example of a media industry making multiple narratives out of **one** story

STORY = CHARACTER
In some of the most effective narratives, it is the actions of characters that drive the narrative

7. Complete the sentences below

- Like Todorov (see left), **Vladimir Propp** believed that narratives are driven by _____
- Propp's work was derived from his studies of Russian folk tales and their characters. In his book *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928), Propp classified characters into _____
- These different character types are defined by the specific _____

_____ adimir Propp (_____ 95–1970)

8. Identify the eight character types proposed by Vladimir Propp. Explain how each one functions in a narrative.

It is worth noting that different character types can overlap in certain stories, *e.g. a single character might send the hero on their journey and reward them when they return. This character would effectively act as the dispatcher and the princess's father.*

GENRE THEORY — Steven Neale (1958–)

1. Fill in the gaps using the words provided – repetition, variation, subverted, Hollywood, stereotypes, copy

- The key to genre is not just _____ but also _____
- Repetition satisfies an audience, to an extent, ___ ___ ___ more interesting for audiences when difference co__ and their expectations are _____
- Neale applied this model to _____ cinema and proposed that a film's genre can be defined based on extent to which it embraces the codes, conventions a__ _____ of the genre
- He also proposed, however, that films will subvert certain conventions and stereotypes so the film can differentiate itself from previous genre entries and not be considered an exact _____ of a previous film

2. In one sentence, explain why media producers might rely on genres

3. According to Neale, why must genres evolve?

THE FLUIDITY OF GENRE

7. What is meant by intertextuality?

The way in which the genre of a media text is classified depends on the media form:

4. Fill in the empty boxes in the table below (a column has been filled out for you)

Media form	Video games	Newspapers	Film	Online media
Genre examples	Platform Shooter Stealth Logic Role-playing			
Mode of classification	Allocated based on the function of the gameplay *i.e. how the player interacts with the game*			

5. Provide a list of reasons why genres appeal to audiences

6. Provide a list of reasons why genres appeal to producers

10. What is meant by a subgenre?

11. Fill in the empty boxes in the table below

GENRE

Genre provides us with a clear way of categorising media products based on their **form, style and content**

14. Provide short definitions for the following key terms:

__rm –

tyl__ –

Co__ __nt –

The ge__re __ a media text can be identified by looking at its codes and conventio__ __d by relating them to other media texts. The repetition of these co__ __d conventions creates a framework that audiences then become familiar with.

Examples of these codes and conventions in action

We can tell Andrés Muschietti's *It* (2017) is a horror film based on the following codes and conventions:
- Character types – a killer clown; a murderer; scared children
- Story Beats – killer stalking victim; nightmare sequences; jump scares
- Technical Codes – rapid editing; low-key lighting; haunting soundtrack
- Locations – rural town; dark tunnels; basements

VERSIONS OF REALITY

Media Representation Theoretical Perspectives

1. Briefly summarise how it is that media texts construct versions of reality

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USEFUL TIP

Think of representation as 'representation' – rather than presenting audiences with reality, media texts take aspects of reality and manipulate them (sometimes very subtly) before presenting them to audiences

2. Describe each stage of the representation process

Producers pick and choose what they want to represent in a text through a process of **selection**, **construction** and **mediation**

Selection →

Hall suggested that **stereotyping** is often used in the mainstream media

Stuart Hall (1932–2014)

Hall was a cultural theorist who highlighted how representation in media texts can create meaning through language – *not just through spoken/written language but through the system of signs and codes explored in the **table below***

4. What is meant by stereotyping?

5. Provide an example of stereotyping in the mainstream media

It is important to consider that contemporary media products (like many you will be studying) use **countertypes** in order to promote a more tolerant and progressive society

6. What is meant by a countertype?

7. Provide an example of a countertypical representation in the mainstream media

The selection and combination of **technical**, **visual**, **verbal** and **audio** codes has an effect on representation and the way the viewer should feel

11. Complete the table below showing how codes and conventions can affect representations and the way the viewer should feel. Use examples of your choice.

Code	Example
Written text	Newspapers such as *The Sun* and *Daily Mail* use verbal codes like wordplay and alliteration to negatively represent left-wing politicians, e.g. the headlines 'Court Jezter' and 'Jezza's Jihadi Comrades' to describe Jeremy Corbyn
Camera shots	

---

8. Fill in the gaps using the words provided – **stereotypes, cultural hegemony, in-groups, social groups, out-groups**

The construction of _____ in the mainstream media usually occurs because of the people who hold power within the industry. We might describe the producers and entrepreneurs who create stereotypes in order to maintain _____ as the _____. In turn, the _____ who are misrepresented by these industries (ethnic minorities, the homeless) might be described as _____.

9. Fill in the gaps using the words provided – **BAME, othering, male, in-groups, out-groups**

'OTHERING'

Hall suggested that _____ effectively prioritise the representations of certain people, groups and ideas at the expense of others (_____).

A key example would be the prominence of straight, white-skinned, _____ heroes in media narratives throughout history – this has resulted in the '_____' of homosexuals and the _____ community, among other groups.

10. What is meant by cultural hegemony?

Answer the following questions on David Buckingham:
a) What does Buckingham specialise in?
b) What did Buckingham propose in relation to children, their identities and the media?
c) According to Buckingham, what does the media encourage parents to do?
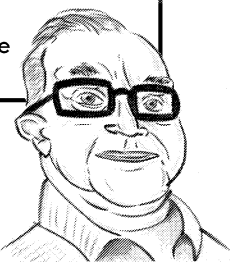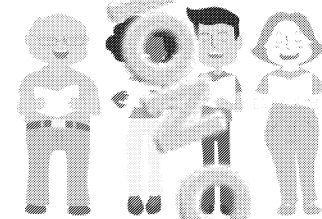
a)

b)

c)

David Buckingham

IDENTITIES AND SUBCULTURES

Media Representation Theoretical Perspectives

In order to study representation, we must look at 'who' the media is representing on a regular basis

Individuals – whenever a person is featured, or even referenced, in a media text, that person is being **represented**. It is common for individuals to be depicted in a way that reduces them to a simplistic character type, *e.g. the hero, the villain, the fool.* It is often the case that, by constructing a representation of an individual, a media text is also representing whatever **social group** or **subculture** that individual belongs to.

1. Describe two examples of identity and subculture in media texts of your choice

2. Identify the six key social groups you are most likely to consider when talking about media representation

Use the acronym GASHER to help you remember

Social groups – every single person fits into a multitude of social groups:
A person might belong to a particular group on the basis of their background or identity. They might also belong to a group on the basis of their values, beliefs and characteristics.

EVENTS

6. Explain how media texts represent events. Use an example, of your choice, in an existing media text to support your explanation

LOCATIONS

7. Explain how media texts represent locations. Use an example, of your choice, in an existing media text to support your explanation

ISSUES AND IDEAS

8. Explain how media texts represent issues and ideas

3. What is meant by a subculture?

Subculture –

4. Provide additional examples of subcultures

Vegans	Punks			

5. Briefly explain the difference between objective groups and subjective groups

12. Fill in the gaps using the words provided – **feminist, cinema, pleasures, heterosexual, objectified, passive objects, active subjects**

GENDER THEORY

Gender has been, perhaps, the most widely discussed issue of media representation throughout history. You will need to be particularly familiar with theoretical perspectives on gender and feminist theory.

9. Fill in the gaps below using the words provided –

Stuart Hall – Theory of Stereotyping
Hall suggested that **stereotyping** is often used in the mainstream media to draw lines between men and women by reducing them to a series of simplistic traits and characteristics

10. Identify masculine stereotypes that have been historically spread by the mainstream media

Laura Mulvey (1941–)

THE MALE GAZE

- Mulvey is a British _____ theorist who studied the representation of women in mainstream
- In her book *Visual and Other _____*, Mulvey suggested that visual media is constructed in a way that caters specifically to the pleasure of male, _____ viewers
- This theory largely explains the various ways in which women's bodies have been _____ over the years
- Mulvey's theory supports the idea that women are often represented as _____, as opposed to

13. Provide definitions for the

Active subjects –

Passive objects –

AUDIENCE INTERPRETATION

Media Audiences
Theoretical Perspectives

Debate has raged over the years as to whether audiences are active or passive

1. Provide definitions for the terms 'active audience' and 'passive audience'

Active audience:

Passive audience:

THE HYPODERMIC NEEDLE THEORY

- This model, also known as 'the magic _____', was originated in Harold Laswell's book _____ *Technique in the World War,* published in _____
- The idea was that media texts, like needles, inject ideas and messages into the _____ of their audience who are, in turn, _____ to reject these messages
- This theory was particularly accepted in the 1940s and 1950s – a period in which media forms such as _____ and television were described as 'plug-in _____'
- This theory is now widely considered to be _____ and patronising to audiences

2. Fill in the gaps using the words provided – **bullet, propaganda, minds, powerless, radio, drugs, outdated, desensitise**

---

7. Fill in the gaps using the words provided – **representation, interpret, encode, decode, three**

STUART HALL – RECEPTION THEORY

In addition to his theories on _____, Stuart Hall also proposed ideas on how audiences actually receive and _____ texts:

- It is widely agreed that producers _____ messages into media texts in order to invoke a particular response from the audience
- The audience, in turn, will _____ these messages. Hall suggested that audiences will not always interpret these messages in the way the producer intended.
- He proposed that audiences could interpret messages in _____ general ways

Stuart Hall (19__ – __014)

The interpretations made by audiences might depend on a number of factors relating to their identity or interests

The two-step flow model

9. Describe the two-step flow model

Particularly with the invention of online and participatory media, it is generally more accepted

---

8. Describe the following three readings, according to Hall's theory

Preferred reading – the audience

Negotiated reading –

Oppositional reading –

10. Provide examples where the following factors might affect someone's reading of media text. One row has been filled in for you.

Factor	Example
Gender	A woman might take an **oppositional reading** of a film with no female characters
Age	
Ethnicity	
Culture	

11. Why is it important not to generalise when you talk about how different demographics might respond to a particular text?

12. Fill in the gaps using the words provided – **preferred, point of view, audience positioning, mode of address, you**

- Stuart Hall used this theory to consider the ways in which producers try to ensure a _____ reading from their audience
- The messages and ideas in a media text will often be constructed in a way that establishes a particular _____
- For example, if a television show features a voice-over narration from a particular character, the producers are often aligning

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Audience Pleasure and Interactivity

Media Audiences
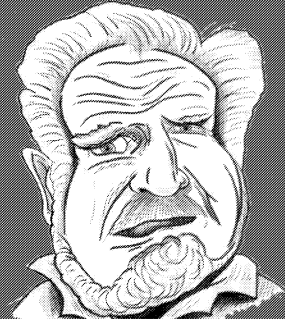## Theoretical Perspectives

7

THE USES AND GRATIFICATIONS MODEL

- This model was originally proposed by Jay _____ and Elihu _____ in _____
- These theorists developed the model based on the idea that media audiences are not _____ – rather, their ability to **select** what media they consume, based on their own needs and desires, makes them _____
- To a large degree, this theory _____ audiences – it suggests that media must acknowledge the requirements of an audience and fulfil these requirements
- If they fail to do so, their products will be left without an _____

1. Fill in the gaps using the words provided – **Blumler, Katz, 1974, passive, select, active, empowers, audience**

2. Fill in the empty boxes in the table below

Need	Explanation	Examples
Entertainment and diversion	The need for audiences to pass time **or** to relax and experience escapism from the stresses of daily life	
Education and information		**Local newspapers** inform audiences as to what is going on in their local community. Someone might watch a **TV documentary** to improve their knowledge of a niche subject
Personal identity		
Social interaction		

3. The approach of the uses and gratifications model is built upon which five ideas?

Elihu Katz (1926—)

Jay Blumler (1924—)

INTERACTION
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CREATOR AND CONSUMER

6. Identify which types of audience are being described below

_____ – the people who experience a piece of art, culture or entertainment directly, in person, *e.g. theatre, live concert, sports event*

_____ – The people who consume traditional media products *e.g. Newspapers, Film, Television, Radio*

_____ – the people who use digital technology, *e.g. video games, online, social and participatory media*. This kind of audience will often try to maintain constant access to the media.

THE INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA

7. Explain how the Internet and social media have made media audiences more interactive

8. List five ways in which modern media audiences can be interactive

1.

VARIOUS FORMS OF AUDIENCE PLEASURE

4. Provide definitions for the below forms of audience pleasure

Aesthetic pleasure –	Catharsis –	Cerebral pleasure –	Vicarious pleasure –	Visceral pleasure –	Voyeuristic pleasure –

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