



# Getting to Know...

Component 2B:

*Woman and Adbusters*

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# Teacher's Introduction

This resource has been written for the Eduqas Media Studies A Level specification (A680QS), with a specific focus on Component 2: Media Forms and Products in Depth: Section B: Magazines – Mainstream and Alternative Media – Option 1: *Woman* (23–29 August 1964) and *Adbusters* (May/June 2016, Vol.23 No.3).

As a 'Getting to Know' pack, this resource has been constructed to actively engage students with the source material through a range of stimulating, focused and entertaining magazine-style articles exploring different topics across the media frameworks and theories. Discussion tasks are included throughout to recap knowledge. At the end of the resource, we have included a range of more challenging essay-style questions for students to test their learning. There is also some content which covers material outside the set pages, which is intended for additional/extension reading.

The structure of the pack is as follows:

1. What Should I Know? – a brief overview of the key facts/information about both set products.
2. Getting to Know – 17 articles on a variety of topics, such as the production background, aesthetics, key themes and cultural context. In these articles, we have tried to focus on the more niche aspects of the texts that may not have been covered by textbooks, to broaden students' understanding.
3. Show What You Know – five essay-style questions on the set products across a range of difficulty levels complete with an answer section.

Our aim with this resource is to provide variety for those students who may feel overloaded by textbooks and other learning materials with a solely academic writing style. Ideally, the blend of informative content and entertaining presentation style will help not only to strengthen a student's knowledge of the texts, but help to foster a genuine interest for the texts.

*April 2024*

## What Should I Know?

The two magazines in this section of the exam have been chosen for their different context; audience; production context.

### ***Woman***

*Woman* is a well-established mainstream magazine which has been published by Time Inc. One of the magazine is a historical copy from 23–29 August 1964. After the Second World War, the popularity of women's magazines, and by 1960 sales had reached about three million. Magazines such as *Woman*, which were at the lower end of the market (this edition was particularly popular as they offered readers something different from glossies such as *Elle*), were more approachable, more realistic in their representations, and more 'friendly'.

*Woman*, being published in 1964, occupies an interesting place in history as it was a time of wave of feminism as women were becoming more independent, more financially liberated after the post WWII domesticity (women who had worked during the war were returning to the domestic sphere as the men reclaimed their place in the workforce). However, it was also a time for women. The availability of the contraceptive pill marked a step towards more independence for women were moving into the world of higher education and work. We would expect the 1964 issue to reflect this increasing independence, although often we find a cultural lag between the changes generally in society and the representations in media texts.

### ***Adbusters***

*Adbusters* is a very different magazine. It's a modern independent publication: An independent publisher based in Vancouver, Canada) has produced six copies per year. As an independent publication, *Adbusters* costs an eye-watering £10.99 per edition! The April 2017 issue and therefore reflects many of the concerns of this time period. The magazine's audience and advocates 'fighting back against the hostile takeover of our psychological environments by commercial forces'.

*Adbusters* is part of an anti-consumerist movement which gained momentum in the late 1990s. In the text of anti-consumerism is Naomi Klein's *No Logo* (2000): the *Adbusters* Media Foundation is described as 'the globalization bible'. Anti-consumerists like *Adbusters* have 'the desire to make corporations and conglomerates and big business as responsible for the ills in society, and they seek to bring about political change through direct action. As a result, the magazine is shocking, critical and encourages its readers to become activists themselves.

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# Getting to Know...

## 1. Why magazines?

Despite the preference for digital products, magazines are still a really popular form to look at supermarket or newsagent shelves to appreciate the vast range available. From weeklies to monthlies, general interest to specialised, there is a magazine for everyone. You can find beauty and fashion tips in magazines such as *Vogue* and *Cosmopolitan*, follow your favourite films and actors in *Empire* and *Total Film*, or pursue your own interests in *Digital Camera* and *Simply Knitting*!

According to **PAMCo**'s latest research, magazines have a 75% coverage of age 15+ readers (that's 40.7 million people), with 38% of these readers still preferring a print copy.

### Mainstream vs independent

The magazine industry is dominated by some big hitters – **conglomerates** such as Future Ltd, Bauer Media, Hearst PLC and Advance Publications. It has been their custom to **horizontally integrate** and acquire magazines and smaller publishers to consolidate their position in the market. According to legend, the CEO of Advance Publications, Samuel I Newhouse, bought Condé Nast in 1955 as an anniversary present for his wife, Mitzi, because she loved *Vogue*, one of the publisher's products. Other more recent **agglomerations** include Immediate Media Company, which was formed from the acquisition of BBC Magazines among others.

However, despite the competition and the cost of getting your magazine out there, recent years have seen a resurgence in the independent magazine. Edgier, more niche, often subversive, these magazines tend to be very different in look and approach to the more mainstream magazine. Relying less on revenue from advertisers (sometimes it's hard to find the articles among the adverts in glossies such as *Vogue*!), these magazines tend to be more expensive and often have a niche audience, or a real mission, in mind in their concept. From magazines with a social and political mission, such as *The Big Issue* (whose aim is to provide 'a hand up, not a handout') to *Huck*, statement is 'We believe in the power of unfiltered voices: stories of positive characters in the light'<sup>1</sup>, these magazines aim to give a voice to marginalised groups, to challenge society beyond magazine as light entertainment.

In this unit, you will study a historical magazine that is regarded as mainstream and a niche magazine. It is really useful to know the difference in publishers, approaches, missions, beginning your study.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.tcolondon.com/platforms/huck>

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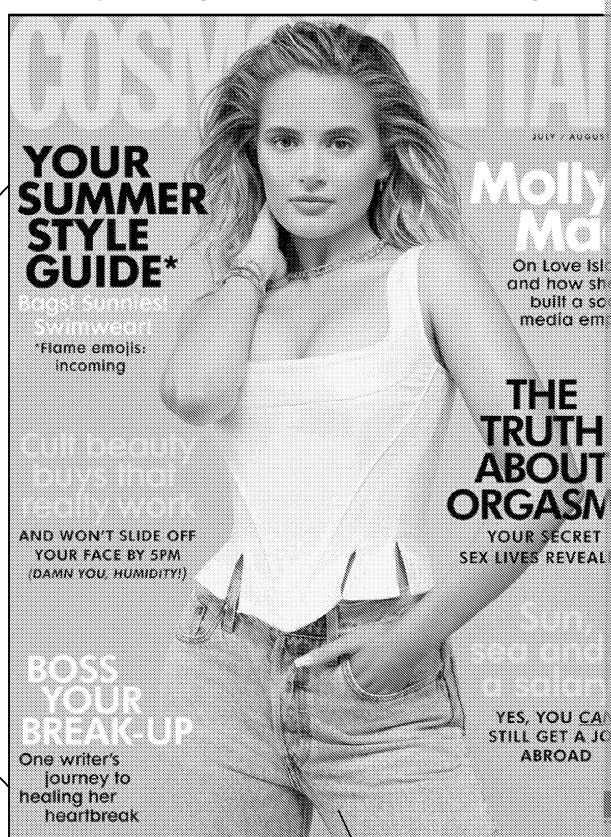
## Codes and conventions of magazines

When studying magazines, it's really useful to know their codes and conventions. When you see them and start to understand how and why many magazines break these codes and conventions. If you've studied GCSE Media then these codes will be familiar to you, but it's always useful to have a quick recap!

A great place to start is the front covers.

Let's look at the front cover of *Cosmopolitan* and explore how the codes and conventions create meaning.

*Cosmopolitan* (magazine) © Hearst Communications, August 2021



**Coverlines:** these give the reader information about what is in the edition. They are often catchy and can create enigmas which entice the reader to buy the magazine. They often make promises to positively influence the reader (like the 'Sun, sea and... a salary?' coverline here). And they appear in a range of colours and styles.

**Main image:** this dominates the cover. Often on mainstream magazines it is someone famous who the readership will identify with. Direct address is important in a cover image to create a connection with the reader and encourage them to buy.

**Colour palettes** are important and often vary depending on the edition of the magazine. Here, oranges and yellows are used for a summer edition of the magazine to create a warm glow! This is complemented by the use of black and white in the majority of coverlines.

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Let's compare this to a front cover for a modern independently published magazine

Like the mainstream magazine, we have a masthead. However, this is not placed in the same way across the cover but seems more stylised and 'arty' in design. The use of edition numbers makes it feel more like an academic publication. There is a distinct lack of coverlines, so other than knowing the edition is focusing on the film *Dune*, the reader has no idea what else is in the magazine, again a form of enigma.



Like the mainstream magazine, a distinct colour palette is used. Here, the use of orange predominantly relates to the setting of the film *Dune*.

## Advertising in magazines

As mentioned earlier, advertising plays an important part in magazine production through a magazine in a waiting room and been hard-pushed to find the actual cost of full-page adverts promoting items we can only dream of owning (from Louboutin shoes to luxury cars).

Advertising is important economically to magazines: in recent figures (2023) advertising made up 40% of magazine revenue in the USA, which equates to \$8.06 billion! And the companies pay eye-watering amounts to feature their products: it can cost up to \$500,000 to buy space of a top US magazine!

The balance between advertising space and articles is one reason why high-end magazines charge high prices for their products at reasonable prices, considering the high production values (a copy of *Vogue* costs £10). It is also why independent magazines, with their limited advertising budgets (and limited circulation), are comparatively expensive: an edition of *Little White Lies* can set you back £10.

But advertising is not just about economics: it's about placing the right products in the right publications to have the maximum impact on target audiences. This obviously benefits the advertiser, but it also helps create the desired representation the magazine producer wants for their target audience. Over decades, women's magazines have advertised beauty and fashion products that their target audience might want and aspire to own. There has also been a sense that they advertise qualities and lifestyle choices (through **soft sell adverts** that create a perfect lifestyle). Many of these magazines have been criticised for presenting too narrow an ideal of women: blonde, skinny, affluent women adorn the advertising pages of magazine campaigns such as Dove Beauty have expanded views about what is beautiful and focus in adverts for women. Other genres of magazine also think carefully about advertising. For example, a magazine such as *The Big Issue*, with its charitable mission statement, it is common to see adverts for food banks, adoption services and the like which will appeal to the ABC1 reformer audience.

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## 2. Semiotic analysis of *Woman*

It is easy to see the kind of magazine *Woman* is from the front cover. And, in a competitive market as we had in the 1960s, it is important that the magazine stands out and appeals to its target audience from the shelves in the newsagent. *Woman* was vying with *Woman's Realm* and *Woman's Weekly* to be the first choice of housewives who, whilst not having lots of disposable income, still wanted escapism and advice in weekly doses.

### Drawing the audience in

Front covers are a really important way of establishing brand identity, and *Woman* appeals to its audience with an engaging cover. From the **strapline** which makes the confident claim to be the 'World's Greatest Weekly for Women' (note the **superlative** here which connotes importance and the well-established brand), to the sans-serif, cursive font of the **masthead**, *Woman* appeals to its female audience of housewives and mothers.

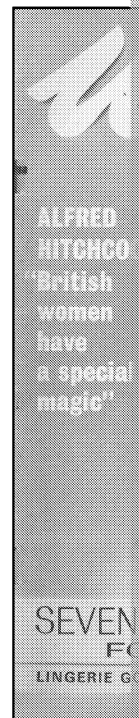
There is an intimacy and informality on the front cover which appeals to the target audience. The model is a good example of wholesome beauty: she is not a celebrity (as you consistently find on the covers of the more expensive glossies); she is dressed in a summery, flower print dress which would be similar to those worn by the audience (definitely not the luxury outfits of the models on more expensive magazines); she has an open and friendly expression and she holds the gaze of the audience with her encouraging smile. This is the kind of woman audiences could identify with and aspire to be like. But, unlike the high-end magazines, her beauty and attractiveness is more attainable.

The sense of understanding the concerns, desires and aspirations of the audience are clear from the **coverlines**. The magazine promises to share 'seven star improvements' for its audience's kitchens, reinforcing the position of women in the domestic sphere after World War II as well as focusing on more modern ideas of home improvement, which was a good way to improve living conditions without having to go to the expense of moving – an appealing idea in this period of **post-war austerity**.

This idea of a woman's position in a **patriarchal society** is also reinforced by the coverline advertising the main feature: an article where Alfred Hitchcock, a well-known British film director, claims that 'British women have a special magic'. 'Magic' is alluring and exciting and a far cry from most housewives' lives. Hitchcock (and the editor) is flattering the audience but also intriguing them: what is this 'special magic' that they have? It is interesting, though, that it is a man who will reveal the answer to this mystery.

Beauty is an important concept that this magazine focuses heavily on, and the coverline 'Are you an A-Level beauty?' is an interesting way of reinforcing this ideal. 'A-Level' suggests academic excellence and an aspiration for many women in the 1960s: it also implies that beauty is something that can be measured and 'passed' like an exam.

The reference to A Levels is a nod to the fact that more women were staying on in education for longer and the 1960s saw more women than ever before going to university (in 1962, 26,000 women were in higher education).



Woman

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However, the aspiration to be beautiful is still hinted at. This adds another enigma to the magazine to find out if they are an 'A-Level beauty'.

But there is a nod to the sexual liberation women were experiencing in the 1960s: 'the 1960s goes lively': there is a cheekiness here and a risqué element suggesting women more adventurous, which is very much of its time.

Part of the attraction of the magazine is its bright and colourful front cover: this is a nod to the bright florals and yellow of the cover are a nod to this. The pastel pink background is very much to that female ideal of the past.

## What's inside?

It's a very different story inside when we find that the whole magazine is in black and white, a convention of 1960s magazines: even high-end products such as *Vogue* used black and white. Economically, this was much more cost-effective: it was important to entice the reader with a vibrant front cover, but the rest is distinctly monochrome.

The contents page tells us more about the magazine's view of its ideal reader. Subdivided into sections on features, fiction, beauty, cookery, fashion, home and knitting, the contents gives a clear view of what the editorial team expects their readers to be interested in. The cookery and knitting sections reflect the 'make do and mend' attitude which was popularised during the war, showing us a society which has not yet been engulfed in the mass **consumerism** we have today. The prestige of the magazine is evident in the inclusion of such as Alfred Hitchcock and Ingrid Bergman, and there is a sense that their inclusion is a nod to the inclusion of a fiction section and articles such as 'Animals All My Life'. But the general tone is one of escapism: horoscopes and fashion: pure escapism for the housewife reader. Hints at empowerment: 'Two for you, one for him' knitting article, are the exception. And overall there is a friendly tone: a friend giving advice and leading its reader through the trials and tribulations of everyday life. 'Woman' and 'How It's Done' sections.

## Discussion questions

- 1) In what ways does the layout and language of the magazine reinforce stereotypes?
- 2) How does the language used in the magazine attract the target audience?
- 3) Look online at modern front covers of the magazine. What is similar/different about this?

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### 3. The changing role of women: domesticity vs liberation

The 1960s is often regarded as a time of real liberation for women: more women longer; more women were entering the workplace; and, with the introduction of married women, women were more in control of their bodies. We often refer to feminism as it marks the next stage of women's move towards independence and equality, after they had gained the right to vote. Betty Friedan, writing the year before our set edition of *Woman*, described this move for independence, saying: 'We can no longer ignore that voice within women that says: "I want something more than my husband and my children and my home."' <sup>2</sup>

#### Wartime independence

This 'something more' had been experienced by many women during World War. With the men away fighting, women were needed to fill the roles left vacant: working in factories, taking on jobs as engineers, bus drivers and mechanics. Women also worked in the Land Army, which had been established as early as 1939, making sure the population did not starve, as well as taking on roles in the armed forces and Special Operations Executive (as spies behind enemy lines!). The country needed them and the women stepped up.

#### Post-war domesticity

And then the men came back: back to their jobs and back to their roles as husbands, fathers and breadwinners. It was seen as important for women to return to their domestic roles as mothers and housewives. So, despite the taste of freedom women had experienced during the war, they were being encouraged back into the home. Much of the media of the time, especially advertising, presents views of the 'ideal woman' as a contented housewife, excited by her role in the domestic sphere. Joanne Meyerowitz, writing about American society at the time said, 'Studies of post-war culture found that government propaganda, popular magazines, and films reinforced traditional concepts of femininity and instructed women to subordinate their interests to those of returning male veterans.' <sup>3</sup> So, back to the kitchen women went. However, having had a taste of freedom, many wanted more.

#### The swinging sixties

Many of the stereotypes of the sixties feature representations of liberated women in miniskirts, Mary Quant bobs, flower power and free love! The Women's Liberation movement gained momentum in the 1960s, starting in the USA and spreading worldwide as women demanded equality. There were marches and protests and demands for equal pay, most famously by the women of the Ford Dagenham car factory who went on strike for a long period because they were paid less than their male counterparts. This dispute, which helped galvanise politicians such as Barbara Casson, was made famous in the film *Made in Dagenham* (2010).

Our set edition of *Woman* was published in 1964, towards the start of this movement. It was a time of transition, between the old and the new, the traditional and the more progressive. We have adverts that were both reinforcing a woman's role being to please men alongside rebellious quotes such as 'I am a woman, not a masterpiece: but who says so? -Man.' And this is what makes it a really interesting time.

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#### Discussion questions

- 1) Why do you think advertisers and film-makers focused on encouraging women back into the home after the Second World War?
- 2) Linking back to your Component 1 study, what different stereotypes of women were used in the 1950s?
- 3) Explore a variety of adverts from the 1950s online. What do you notice about a) beauty products and b) the representation of women?

<sup>2</sup> Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, W. W. Norton, 1963

<sup>3</sup> Not June Cleaver: *Women and Gender in Postwar America*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000

## 4. Myths of femininity: the representation of women in the 1960s

In its representation of women, our set magazine can be seen, like most in the 1960s, to promote a particular view of the beauty ideal. Flick through the pages of *Woman* and we see women who are not only traditionally wholesome and beautiful. There is a mix: the women who reflect the ideal of the smiling model in her summer dress on the front cover, and more aspirational celebrities between the covers – women such as Jackie Kennedy, Grace Kelly and Elizabeth Taylor. At the same time, the time are referenced – women such as Tippi Hedren and Ingrid Bergman. But there is also a sense of ethnicity: as bell hooks discusses, the Western beauty ideal is of light-skinned women, and women of colour are to be marginalised and under-represented. And in 1964, this definitely seems to be the case. The widow of the assassinated American President JFK, is described as having ‘a devoted beauty’, surely representing the aspirations of the women who both wrote and read the magazine.

From this very first editorial feature (Personally Yours), we get a good idea of expected behaviour and appearance: in an advert for a ‘yachting gear-and-gift shop’ women are told to be practical, sometimes go ‘adrift on glamour’ and in the (supposedly) comical ‘Sized to Fit’ section, ‘No, of course there’s nothing wrong with your weight, Mildred – it’s just you should be six-foot-five.’ So, from the outset, women are told they need to be a certain way, a message that continues throughout the set edition.



Madeleine Carroll

### British women: hidden depths

In the Alfred Hitchcock interview on British women, we are bombarded with beauty expectations: the actress Madeleine Carroll is described as ‘the epitome of the English rose’. Tippi Hedren ‘embodies that British feminine high-style’ [Hitchcock] find[s] so attractive’, and Hitchcock warns men that ‘to look good she has to feel cared for.’

High expectations for any woman reading the magazine. They are supposed to look good, be feminine and epitomise the ‘English rose’. No room for diversity here! Being judged by your looks wasn’t just about what men thought, but women measured themselves against other women, as

in the problem page letter when a woman laments, ‘Now there’s a risk of losing my affair with a neighbour’s wife (she is very attractive)’. Interestingly, the advice given is that she ‘become a really warm and loving wife, night and day’!

It’s in the ‘Are you an A-Level beauty?’ article that we get the best idea about the beauty ideal. The article is clever, playing on the idea of exams (in the 1960s at school you would take O Levels at 16 and then A Levels at 18). Given that more women were staying on at school, the magazine’s focus and suggests she should pass an A Level in beauty: ‘Are you A-level beauty? It’s a test which teaches over 40 make-up tips.’ Playful though it is, there is a message about a woman’s priorities should be. Beauty tips abound, focusing on how women should look, like ‘a droopy chin-line’, ‘pudginess’ and an ‘over-rosy complexion’. We are led from advice on how to ‘trim [a face] down to a better oval’, to making eyes ‘bigger, more lustrous’ and achieving the ‘look of a fresh rose petal’. Perfect advice for the English roses reading the magazine. Throughout: apparently, ‘A-Level girls are always searching for new, prettier ways to achieve the right make-up gives lips ‘a prettier shape’ and women can achieve a ‘pretty perfect’ look. The rose imagery continues as women are advised to ‘disguise’ their ‘flaws’ and ‘trims’, like cultivating a beautiful flower. We are left with the feeling that how we need to disguise, hide and change our appearance so that we are more acceptable.

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### Discussion questions

- 1) The article has focused on attitudes to beauty. What examples of expected female behaviour can you find?
- 2) In what ways do the adverts in the set edition add to our understanding of the beauty ideal?
- 3) Have beauty standards changed in modern women’s magazines? Collect a variety of from different magazines and complete a textual analysis of three showing similarities and differences.

## 5. Women in a man's world? Hegemonic power and representation

### A woman's place

Despite the fact that *Woman* magazine had a female editor, Barbara Boxall, as modern readers we still find attitudes towards women and **societal expectations** very restrictive. In the editorial, the section on Jackie Kennedy discusses women who have lost their husbands as 'wives-left-alone' and talks about a widow 'finding a new place in a world where she's suddenly a lonely odd-one-out.' The tone of the piece very much suggests a world where women are defined by their marital status: without their man they are the 'lonely odd-one-out'. Although the message is increasingly strong in the 1960s, the overwhelming message in women's magazines of the time was that marriage and children were things to aspire to. On the problem page, when a woman's husband is having an affair with a neighbour, she initially blames herself for being 'not given an easy ride by the agony aunt either, being told to 'become a really warm day' in an effort to win him back. At no point is his infidelity blamed on HIM, and the wife is left hurtful: 'Unless your coldness has killed all his affection (which I hope is not so), then you must solve this problem.' A woman's role is made clear: she needs to support the family and keep her husband happy.

#### Alfred Hitchcock

Born in Leytonstone, London, in 1899, Alfred Hitchcock was a British film director. Known as one of the greatest film directors of all time, Hitchcock started his career in England, first as a title card designer before directing films such as *The Lady Vanishes* and *Jamaica Inn*. He and his family moved to Hollywood in 1940 where his breakthrough was an adaptation of *Rebecca* (1940). He went on to create a huge array of masterpieces including *Psycho*, *North by Northwest* and *Vertigo*. His films tended to be psychological thrillers with elements of the macabre/horror. As a director, he was famously obsessed with a type of leading actress (tall, blonde-haired and blue-eyed) and many had a difficult relationship with him. Hitchcock was knighted in 1979 and died on 29<sup>th</sup> April 1980.

### Hitchcock article: distraction or more of the same?

With so many messages advocating domesticity and obedience, an article about Hitchcock would provide a welcome distraction, right? In a modern magazine, we would expect a director to focus on their films, their approach to their work, etc. But, even here we are told what an Englishwoman is like and how they are attractive to men. The aim is to make the housewife reader feel good about her 'special magic'. But we once again have a famous and successful one at that. The interview claims to '[unravel] the mystery of Hitchcock' and Hitchcock starts by telling his interviewer that 'one of the most surprising women I've ever known is a seemingly unemotional English housewife'.

This **stereotype** is one that he returns to throughout the article: English housewives having the reputation of being cold and unemotional (remember the distraught wife from the problem pages?). However, Hitchcock goes on to reveal, with some admiration, that 'This woman had a jealous husband, a devoted admirer and the kind of romantic reputation you usually associate with movie stars'. This unidentified woman bears a real resemblance to Laura Jesson, the main character in David Lean's wartime hit *Brief Encounter*: regarded as one of the greatest British films of all time, it's a tale of a bored housewife who falls in love with a stranger at a railway station. She eventually goes back to her husband, unable to leave him. What is Hitchcock advocating here? That readers of *Woman* should aspire to this kind of 'romantic' life? It simply seems exciting to the housewife dipping into the magazine between finishing her shopping or collecting her children from school. And it serves to illustrate his point that we should not see British women as 'they're like snow-capped volcanoes: all shimmering respectability with a volcano of passion underneath.' The adjectives here are interesting: surely all women would be 'shimmering' and 'simmering'?!

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**Focus on theory: Liesbet van Zoonen**

Liesbet van Zoonen's gender theory suggests that women and men are represented in media, and this is particularly relevant in a historical text such as *Woman*. Women are objectified in media texts in a way that men just aren't. The representation of femininity as 'nurturance and compassion' as opposed to masculinity, which is about 'efficiency'. Women as objects and as caring and nurturing individuals can clearly be seen in the text elsewhere in the magazine. In flattering women by comparing them to 'snow-capped' describing women as objects of male sexual desire.

**'Seductive depths' and 'flirty girls'**

The Hitchcock interview continues in a similar vein: it's a combination of flattering women with 'seductive depths' and discussing how his leading ladies have this English quality, a combination of coldness and passion (even though most of the leading ladies, such as Ingrid Bergman and Audrey Hepburn, were not even English!). He's 'struck by the number of exciting women you find in the street' and cites Nottingham (the birthplace of his wife) as having 'a thriving industry in which like women are being created for the delectation of men!'

All of this seeks to flatter the *Woman* reader, to make her feel that she has hidden qualities, not only obscured by the monotony of her role as housewife and mother. It is interesting to see even when flattering women, Hitchcock is regarding them as potential objects of desire, not without criticism, veiled and overt. By suggesting we should 'never underestimate the power of the female' is implying that that is exactly the experience of the contemporary reader? He later says 'I'm inhibited' and says of teenage girls 'I can't understand why they come in for so much criticism'. Here he leaves the reader wondering what that criticism might be. The only criticism of British women is when he says he can't bear 'The British voice. It's too high-pitched. I have wandered round their house after reading the article, speaking out loud and sharing this national flaw?!

**A woman's role**

And even Hitchcock's own family is not immune from his critical evaluation. He suggests his wife has not regretted marrying him, and his evidence once again reinforces societal expectations of men and women: 'At least her prowess as a cook has never wavered and I'm convinced that one of the first signs of indifference in a wife is when her cooking suffers.' Jokey this may be, but, given the fact that his wife played an active role in his film-making, the comment seems quite reductive. The importance of a woman's role is reinforced when he discusses the actress Vera Miles, who turned down the leading role of a housewife, she had a baby instead' (note the adjective 'devoted' here and the idea of a career in film to fulfil her role as a mother). He also manages to criticise his daughter when discussing the fact that, although a trained actress who he had 'used successfully', she didn't have that essential British quality he looks for in a leading lady. He is referring to a nice British quality: discretion. She doesn't nag... Which makes Hitchcock happy to see her behave when things don't go their way!

The article is a fascinating exploration of what men think of women, what the magazines tell them to hear, and how women view themselves. It is a combination of flattery, jokiness and

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PROTECTED****Discussion questions**

- 1) The article discusses the fact that the 'unemotional English housewife' has 'seductive depths'. Give examples in the magazine of this opposition?
- 2) Hitchcock here explains his thoughts about women. Looking at adverts from the 1960s, what attitudes from men? What do they say about the behaviour and characteristics of women?
- 3) Using the article as a starting point (and then looking at the rest of the set edition), can you identify the *Woman* reader?

<sup>4</sup> Sreberny, A. and van Zoonen, L. (eds.) (2000). *Gender, Politics and Communication*. Cresskill, N J: Hampton Press.

## 6. It's a man's world... isn't it? Men and *Woman*

### Women are complicated creatures?

*Woman* magazine is full of **binary opposites** in its representation of women... but what about men?

The 1960s, whilst a time of increasing independence for women, still felt like a man's world. Men were the main breadwinners, and they expected their women to look after the home and their children. This is reflected in the Hitchcock 'You judge an Englishman's status by the car he drives, which is hard luck on his feet'. The reference to women as 'female appendages' clearly establishes the relative in according to Hitchcock at least, and sits very uncomfortably with the modern reading of van Zoonen's assertion that men tend to be represented through efficiency, rationality and control.

However, this attitude is juxtaposed with a more progressive view: in the 'Extra Special on Men' prominent text box declaring 'Man is Creation's masterpiece: but who says so?' – a different approach to men: rather than seeing themselves as obedient 'appendages' a woman's position is suggested. You definitely get the sense that, in making this declaration, *Woman* is fighting back!

Women being nurturing towards men (van Zoonen again) can be seen on the cover of 'Made For Romance'. Knitting for your man is obviously a way to show your affection, but it is a suggestion of women getting more: she might knit something to please her partner, but she looks after herself too (as 'Two for you, one for him' implies!).

### Getting to know men

The 'Extra Special on Men – Getting to Know Them' gives us the most interesting insight into the magazine's attitude towards men in this time period (certainly from the magazine's perspective). While the article reflects the stronger, more empowering stance the magazine is expected to take, there is a sense of indulgence towards men as hapless individuals who rely on the women to admit. In the section on clothes ('Dig Him') we are told from an expert source that men – after talking it over at the weekend with his wife' and that he buys best 'when he asks his wife' – 'women... care more about quality.' This representation of women as being more being relied on to choose the right things for their husband, might subvert van Zoonen's assertion of individuality in the representation of men: instead they appear to be indecisive about to choosing what to wear! There is a similar knowingly confident tone in the section on grooming where men are told that it is 'catching up with ours' (in this area at least, women are seen as more confident). Men are represented as worried about appearance (something suggested as a more female concern in *Woman* magazine) when they seek to cover up their bald patches with 'hairpieces' and 'grease'. The amusement towards men is clear here: this certainly gives a different view of men than the businessman in the creme puff advert!

#### Focus on theory... Claude Lévi-Strauss

Claude Lévi-Strauss was a French anthropologist, known as a structuralist theorist. His theory suggests that narratives (and we can apply this to media texts generally) are structured around **binary opposites**. The simplest way to look at this theory is through a narrative that shows the battle between good versus evil, for example. In the set edition we can see complex representations of men and women. Women are represented as quite passive and appearance-oriented (in the creme puff advert) and yet strong and independent (in much of the 'Extra Special on Men' advert) as active and decisive (again in the creme puff advert) and yet, in the 'Extra Special on Men' advert, they are assured and more dependent on women, certainly when it comes to taste! Much of this can be explained in historical context: 1964 was a time when the roles of women in particular were being challenged.

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## Men of mystery?

The article 'Extra Special on Men' develops a superior tone and a sense of authority, providing information on men that will help a woman navigate through her relationship. We are told that 'one in ten' men are colour blind (which might account for their reluctance to wear a hat) and that their greater lung capacity explains why 'they beat us at games'. The cartoon reassures women that swimming is something women excel at as they are 'more aquatic'. We are told 'If your boy friend trots out the old man-is-a-superior-animal business card, a test has been devised which can accurately measure the relative mental capacities of the two'. A long-suffering annoyance about men's attitudes here which seems at odds with the representations in the magazine. More **binary opposites** which perhaps reflect the attitudes of the 1960s. And men are certainly represented as straightforward creatures here: 'straightforward (in general), sports, cars [and] politics' and actually don't 'enjoy nights out with the girls'. Superior men and women as their 'appendages', the article seems to represent men as lacking in confidence.

## Normal service resumed?

So far so good... the 'Extra Special on Men' article seems to be designed to empower women and give them, for once, some sense of superiority over men. However, there is still an element that men have real importance in the lives of women. The section on 'Give-aways for Guys' suggests that women might buy their men to show their affection. In some ways, a typical representation of men showering their women with gifts. So the message is empowering women and suggesting that, with more financial independence in the 1960s, should women treat their partners? Or do women need to treat their men to keep them happy? From a wine rack that holds 'six man-size bottles' to the more puzzling 'four-month supply of... yes, but not the most romantic thing (certainly not as romantic as a home-knitted sweater)'. Summary

### Discussion questions

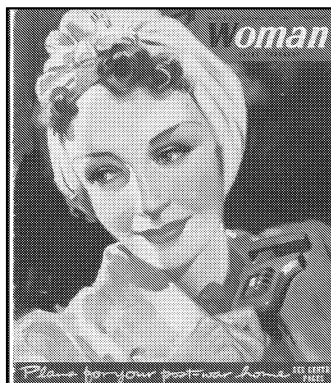
- 1) This article in many ways presents a more progressive view of women and their relationships. Find other references to men in the set edition: are there examples which reinforce or contradict this view?
- 2) Using van Zoonen's assertion that, in media texts, 'femininity is about care, nurturance and emotion' and 'masculinity is about efficiency, rationality and individuality', make notes on the set edition, thinking about the representation of men with this statement.
- 3) Find a range of adverts from the 1960s which depict men. Do any of the examples you find challenge the representation of men in the set edition?

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## 7. Advertising: post war stereotypes or changing roles?

The media generally, and advertising in particular, can be very powerful in terms of establishing societal expectations. During World War Two (1939–45), with the men away fighting, the role of the media seemed to be to encourage women into the workplace, to fill the jobs the men were unable to do. From magazine covers to the adverts within them, women were depicted as workers, often involved in hard manual jobs in the hope that this would encourage other women, married or single, into the workplace.



Note the front cover of *Woman* magazine [top left] depicting a female engineer (reminiscent of the famous Rosie the Riveter character) and the advert for Hoover [top right] which places women very much at the centre of the war effort.

After the war, however, women were encouraged to return to their domestic lives, as the men returned and were expected to take up their jobs again. And the women's magazines and their adverts reinforced the stereotype of the housewife. The 1945 edition of *Woman* [bottom left] is already enticing women with 'furnishing tips', and the 1953 Hoover advert [bottom right] is now focused on the housewife, loving her life of domesticity.



### Advertising in *Woman*

So, how does all of this affect our set edition? By 1964, we were starting to see the effects of the second wave of feminism (the first wave is generally associated with women getting the vote). During the 1960s, more women were entering higher education and the workforce and demands for equality were growing. We would expect to see this reflected in the media

of the time. However, there is often a **cultural lag** between what is happening in society generally and what is produced in media texts. So, in a text created in 1964, we might expect to see a combination of more traditional stereotypes and more progressive representations.

The adverts in the set edition certainly tend towards the more traditional, focusing on homes, pets, family and beauty. Women are offered products that enhance their beauty 'at a moment's notice', that encourage them to feed their dogs well (whilst receiving a free sachet of 'super coconut crème dog shampoo!') whilst being directed to other publications that offer a free 'guide to family cooking' and a 'superb review of 1964's sensational house of the year'. The mixture of aspiration and frugality here reflects the fact that the country was finally coming out of post-war austerity and moving to a more affluent period. But housewives, used to budgeting carefully (and standing in rationing queues), would be enticed by free products and offers.

### Max Factor perfection

One of the main adverts in the set edition is for 'creme puff by Max Factor'. The focus here is on ease of use: the product can provide 'beauty at a moment's notice' that's 'so easy' and will make you 'perfectly lovely again' with 'a few quick touches'. In the **copy** we definitely get the sense of a woman on the go, with a busy life. So that's progress, yes? Well, sort of, but we still see all the old stereotypes, in both the copy and the images. Women are constantly aiming to be 'perfectly lovely' and 'sure of [their] beauty': it's an expectation

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In contrast, the man, dressed in a suit so that he looks professional, is active, coming to wait for her. In the final, main image he is admiring her as she performs her 'velvety even finish' (note the adjective connoting luxury here). We see the woman, with her 'flawless' bloom, is the object of his gaze (and he seems very pleased). Obviously, the advert is working hard to sell a reasonably priced product to its target audience, while reinforcing gender stereotypes and underlining traditional societal expectations along the way.

The advert for Breeze beauty soap seems more progressive: it features a more risqué image of a woman, naked apart from soap suds, which seems a nod to the idea of liberation which we associate with the sixties. The soap reinforces a woman's desire for 'freshness' and the need for a soap that shows 'kindness'. The **advertising copy** is a friendly and persuasive voice, of the kind we see elsewhere in the magazine, that addresses the reader as 'darling'. So, an advert that gives a woman control over her looks, and not necessarily to please a man. In the copy and the tagline, however, the focus is on the woman being 'all-over feminine': here, cleanliness is associated with femininity. Once again, products are being sold alongside societal expectations.

**Advertising copy** – the text used in an advert to anchor the images

[illegible]

It is the advert for the WRAC (Women's Royal Army Corps) which presents the idea of women as more independent, liberated, promising 'careers, travel, independence, friendship'. It feels like a link back to World War II and the kind of opportunities women had in what was previously considered a man's world. The advert is clever: being on the same double-page spread as the problem page, it feels like advice column, offering disaffected women an alternative to their boring and unfulfilling daily lives. Women who want to make friends, gain promotion or just leave their homes are offered an alternative: a life that offers 'so much time, purpose and action' with the WRAC.

All the classic features of an advert are found here: from reinforce the problems women might face, the constant WRAC as an institution that offers a better life, to the 'About You?' There are still things that a modern reader constant reference to its target audience as 'girls' and that employers would be worried about a woman's 'ag admonitory tone in 'Things happen to people not place blame.' So, we see some steps forward in the representation independence and agency. But, in 1964, *Woman* maga

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## Discussion questions

- 1) Look at some of the smaller ads on p. 52 of the magazine. How do these use language to represent women?
- 2) How do you think we, as twenty-first-century readers, view the adverts differently from women in 1952?
- 3) Search the Internet for other adverts aimed at women in the same year as our set product. Do you find any that challenge traditional stereotypes? Are there any that show a more progressive representation of women?

## 8. IPC: the magazine giant! (*Woman*)

### The origins of *Woman*

*Woman* was first published way back before the Second World War: the first edition appeared on shelves in **June 1937**. It was priced at just 2d (two old pence) and promised to cover 'the domestic and career woman'. The title was produced by **Odhams Press Ltd** and the fact that it was a full colour magazine printed at the company's print works in Weybridge (all other magazines were printed in black and white). The magazine was a commercial success, selling 500,000 copies every week! At its peak, in the late 1950s, its sales had grown to over 1 million copies every week.

### The formation of the IPC

Acquiring a magazine like this was an enticing prospect for an ambitious entrepreneur, looking to grow their own brand. So, in stepped **Cecil Harmsworth King**, media tycoon and chairman of the Mirror Group. **Horizontal integration** was very much at the heart of his plans, and he began buying up newspapers and magazines, eventually joining them together to form the IPC (International Publishing Company) in 1963. Since its inception, *Woman* had had to battle for top spot against other women's magazines from rival companies: *Woman's Own* (published by Newnes) and *Woman's Weekly* (published by Amalgamated Press). Now, as King realised his ambitions, these three rivals were brought together by what became the largest media **conglomerate** of the time. So, instead of continuing as rivals, the three popular magazines became 'sister' magazines, and this allowed King to both rationalise what was an overcrowded market, by making sure his company controlled what was covered in the magazines, as well as appeal to the widest audience possible.

### Cecil Harmsworth King

The mastermind behind the creation of the IPC was Cecil Harmsworth King. King was born in Hertfordshire in 1901 and lived between England and Ireland. After gaining a history degree from Oxford in 1918, he had hoped to work for his uncle, Lord Northcliffe, and his two newspapers, the *Daily Mail* and *The Times*. King was ambitious and had worked for his uncle during his university holidays, viewing him as the 'favourite nephew' and having ambitions to eventually take over the two papers. However, his uncle's death that year meant the two newspapers were taken over by two different owners. Undeterred, King worked in newspapers in Scotland before moving back to England and working for the *Daily Mail*, and then the *Daily Mirror* and *Daily Pictorial*. By 1951, King had become chairman of the Mirror Group, having a vision of making the *Daily Mirror* into the most influential domestic paper and in 1963, he had acquired a number of magazine publishers and formed the IPC. King had a massive amount of self-confidence, with many people viewing him as a megalomaniac, leading to him being fired as chairman of the IPC in 1969.

This marked the end of King's involvement with the media: he moved to Ireland and lived in isolation. So, a brilliant man who is seen to have been TOO self-confident and per-

### Monopoly?

If a conglomerate buys up too many of its rivals, there is the danger of it becoming a **monopoly** (the same principle as the board game where your aim is to buy up as many properties as possible so that you have total control over your opponents). In the 1960s, when King was buying up as many newspapers and magazines as he could, the organisation established to ensure a monopoly wasn't created was the Monopolies Commission. This commission was established to ensure fairness and make sure that one

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company did not have complete domination over its rivals. In 1961, this issue, and from it, was debated in Parliament where the then Prime Minister, Sir Harold Macmillan, said the amalgamations now in prospect might have the result of establishing a monopoly of magazines and periodical publications. We shall watch this position. If periodicals came under a single control, there would be opportunities for increased efficiency and circumstances might arise which would justify a reference to the Monopolies and Restrictive Practices Commission. Two major concerns about monopolies: that it could push up the price of publication.

Another concern was raised as late as 1990 by columnist Harold Lind looking back at the publishers: 'the major drawback of a monopoly is that it tends to be painfully inefficient, hurting the public less by its extortionate demands than by the use of its dominant position to suppress desirable innovation.'<sup>6</sup>

So, price, choice and now innovation are cited as the issues of a monopoly. This was the first edition, being published only a year after the creation of the IPC. But, over the next few years, the number of magazines did indeed decline, by about 50%. However, whether the decline was due to the monopoly, or whether it was more about its readership, it is hard to say. After the war, in the 1960s and 1970s, it is understandable that women wanted something different from what had been created in very different times and with a very different audience in mind.

## The end of the IPC

By 1998, with King long gone from the conglomerate, the IPC was bought by Time Inc. and publisher of magazines such as *Time* and *Sports Illustrated*. Eventually it was decided that the IPC should disappear, and this happened in 2014. *Woman*, though, along with its fellow sister publications, is still in **circulation**, over 80 years after its first edition. It is now marketed as 'the must-have weekly features and fashion magazine that inspires 40-plus women to discover new ideas and inspiration' that 'recognises the reader's "don't tell me I can't" attitude' and 'delivers a compelling mix of content, which reflects this "can do" attitude.' So, despite Lind's pessimism about the lack of innovation, *Woman* has certainly changed and adapted to engage a slightly different readership from the one it started off with, all those decades ago.

### Focus on theory: Curran and Seaton (power and media industries)

Curran and Seaton's theory focuses on the fact that the media is owned by a small number of large companies driven by the logic of profit and power. This concentration of the media can result in a lack of originality in the products they produce. In his desire to acquire all the rival women's magazines, Curran is said to be guilty of being driven by profit and power, and maybe bringing all the magazines under the control of the same company was not the best thing for the women's magazine industry.

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### Discussion questions

- 1) Based on your reading and your study of A Level Media so far, what do you think are the key factors for media industries?
- 2) Looking at the set edition of *Woman*, can you think of the reasons why readership of women's magazines has changed drastically in the following 20 years?
- 3) Doing your own research, find out who are the main magazine publishers in the UK today and how they have changed to reflect the demands of today's readers?

<sup>5</sup> <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1961/jan/31/newspaper-and-magazine-industry>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.referenceforbusiness.com/history2/4/IPC-Magazines-Limited.html>

## 9. A woman's place...? Audiences and cultivation

Looking at representations in the media, many theorists have discussed the fact that, when we see the same messages repeated over and over, there is a tendency to accept these as 'real'. It's a process that Barthes refers to as **naturalisation**, and theorist George Gerbner explores in his cultivation theory.

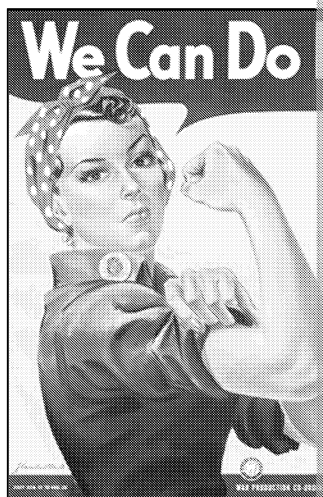
### Who was Gerbner and what were his ideas?

George Gerbner's theory originated in his studies of propaganda in Nazi Germany (he witnessed as he was forced to flee the country in 1939, at the start of World War II). He saw the power to promote potentially dangerous messages, something the Nazi Party used in the 1930s. Over in his adopted country of America in the 1950s, Gerbner saw the power of ideas like the 'mean world syndrome' in which he suggested that people might become more violent due to depictions of violence on their TV screens. His cultivation theory in a nutshell: the more representation repeated over time (and these are mainstream representations) can

The idea of repeated representations is definitely prevalent in the media and in advertising. The power to influence audience behaviours, when buying a product or even when choosing a career, is something that is central to the world of advertising and can definitely be seen in the

### Wartime representations

Using ideas of cultivation was important in the war effort. During World War II, it was vital for women to be encouraged to help in the once male domain of the world of work. And many adverts encouraged this move; most famously perhaps was the iconic figure of Rosie the Riveter. Designed by Westinghouse, the advert (right) appeared in newspapers throughout the USA and showed a female worker using a strong gesture code with her muscles flexed in a way usually reserved for depictions of men. Similar posters appeared in the UK, encouraging women to join organisations such as the Land Army (right also). Here the woman is depicted in a similar stance; she is a strong and confident worker. These adverts were seen on billboards and in magazines and newspapers, and their repeated message is clear: women were needed to help with the war effort and leave the **domestic sphere** they were used to.



**Domestic sphere**  
view of  
home  
into the  
these

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**Symbolic code**  
code  
represents  
depicted

**Gesture**  
of a person



### Back to domesticity

Once the war was over, media producers saw the need to encourage women back into the home. Some, like the producers of the *Tide* advert (Component 1), directly referenced the Rosie the Riveter advert in an attempt to encourage women back into the kitchen (see left). Only here, the **symbolic code** of hearts above the housewife and the **gesture code** of hugging the box of Tide makes it perfectly clear where women were expected to be: in the

But it was not just in advertising that we see this focus on women as homemakers. Whether in the depiction of the perky Samantha in *Bewitched* or the inadequacies of *Mary Poppins*, the importance of the woman in the home was found everywhere. And in women's magazines of the time, the focus on women in the home was **ubiquitous**: discussions of what it meant to be a good wife, mother and homemaker appear throughout the pages of magazines. This **proliferation** of images of wife and mother is Gerbner's theory in action: if women are constantly bombarded with messages about the importance of women in the home, they accept this as part of life.

Ubiquitous  
everywhere

Proliferation  
something

## Messages and values in *Woman*

So, how does this work in our set edition? If we look at the contents page, we see so many tips and pieces of advice for the housewife and mother. As an edition published at the end of August, there is a focus on back to school, a mother's role being to prepare her children for this move. This is seen in both the 'Healthy Living' article, which focuses on 'Starting school', and the 'Back to School Clothes' advice, which appears in the 'Fashion' section of the magazine! The message that the *Woman* reader should be careful with her money is a reflection of the post-war austerity that working-class women were still feeling in the early 1960s. Advice about choosing clothes that are 'smart [and] practical' is given, and women are asked to consider whether 'to sew, or buy...' This sense of frugality is repeated in the cookery article 'Making the Most of Bacon'. No fancy cooking here, but a practical focus on cheap cuts of meat. If we link back to Gerbner, the message that is being cultivated here is that a woman cares about her family and manages her money carefully.

Woman

This message of **frugality** continues in the kitchen feature where a range of kitchen makeovers, from budget to aspirational, are presented: the whole feature is described as 'a wise money-saving guide', representing its female readers as sensible and shrewd. Women are offered quick fixes that are 'ideal for a kitchen that's so narrow you bang your back bending down' and budget improvements are suggested: women are told that 'odd-shape off-cuts are cheaper' when choosing a plastic sheet for their drainer.

Frugal  
money  
Character

Even when more expensive changes are suggested, there is still a focus on budget: the most expensive kitchen transformation 'takes a handyman a good week's work' but 'look at the money-saving that's involved...' Even the most affluent of readers is represented as prudent and careful with money. An awareness of the time pressure busy housewives are under runs through this feature: the 'wipe clean plastic' table top can be achieved with just 'fifteen minutes' work'. And, in line with other messages in this magazine, there is a sense of agency when women are told of a sink unit 'any girl can assemble it quickly'; however, 'the man in your life' is needed to 'glue it together'. Obviously a woman can't be trusted with something like glue!



Woman (magazine)

So far, the repeated messages seem to be that *Woman*'s readers are time-constrained in their home and family (the kitchen feature is titled 'A present for your kitchen' but are careful with their money and like a bargain without compromising on quality.

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The problem page is a key element of reinforcing these messages and values about a woman's role. Women are reminded of when they should be sexually active (even at a time when more independence was given through the availability of the contraceptive pill): the agony aunt clearly states 'mature people accept that the price of sexual love is marriage...' The noun 'price' here is interesting, suggesting that, if a woman is interested in having a sex life, then they have to marry to get one. There is a real sense of the agony aunt reminding the reader of her responsibilities: to a woman who is involved in an extramarital affair she says 'be a real mother to your children, teaching them goodness and the value of truth, not sex intrigue.' The idea that you can't be a 'real' mother if your sex life is complicated is clear. And even when the wife is doing all the work and the husband is not pulling his weight, the message is 'be brave for the sake of your children and your marriage.'

So, as Gerbner suggests, in this set edition of *Woman* there are clear repeated messages and values about the reader's life and her role as a housewife and mother. She cares deeply about her home and family, giving up on herself. She wants the best for her family but is careful with money and thinks of herself wherever possible.

### Discussion questions

- 1) The housewife stereotype seems very old-fashioned to us as modern readers. But is it still relevant? Make a note of the women you encounter in a day's media viewing (think about everything you see on TV to your series binge-watching). What are the messages and values about a woman's role in the 1960s compared to now?
- 2) Whilst there are many repeated messages in the magazine about women as housewives and mothers, are there in this set edition that contradicts those traditional roles?
- 3) What is your response to Gerbner's cultivation theory? Do you think this is how the media shapes our messages and values?

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## 10. Semiotic analysis of *Adbusters*

It is clear from the front cover of our set edition that *Adbusters* is a magazine unlike those that usually sit on the newsagent's shelves, which are typically in vibrant colours and full of smiling (or pouting!) models and celebrities. It is unlike any of the fashion, beauty and lifestyle magazines which pervade the market).

The cover image alone reminds us that we are about to delve into a very different kind of magazine. The dress code of camouflage jacket connotes conflict, something which is reinforced by the gesture code of the man who has clenched fists and an angry expression with his brow furrowed. He also seems to be shouting, which could be seen as a **call to action**. Models on the front of magazines are usually photographed in sharp focus with attention paid to every last detail: however, our main image here has a mottled effect which partially covers the main character and the **masthead** to give a raw, edgy look, and a collage style which runs through much of the magazine.

This is definitely not a lifestyle magazine intended for skim-reading but it announces itself as a serious magazine engaged with ideas about conflict and struggle.

### The front cover: a break with convention?

The **masthead** is in the usual place, along the top of the front cover, and is in a bold, capitalised font. However, this is where the similarity to conventional/mainstream magazines ends. Like the cover image, it too has a mottled effect partially obscuring it: we are definitely not dealing with an industry glossy here. The name of the magazine goes a long way to explaining its ideology. 'Busters' has connotations of destruction (when we bust something we break it completely), and this magazine is about destroying 'ads': in this case symbols of a capitalist, consumerist society.

This idea of destroying is continued in the title of this edition: 'Post-West' can be seen as a look to life beyond (post) Western ideals and attitudes. So, to sum up, from the looking at a call to arms for its readers: the editors want readers of *Adbusters* to destroy capitalist ideas and look towards a future beyond consumerism.

The need for readers to become involved in the cause *Adbusters* promotes goes beyond what is reiterated on the website where the foundation is 'trying to forge a new way of living to escape the capitalist paradigm and halt humanity's slide into a 10,000-year-long ice age to 'join our revolutionary activist collective'.<sup>7</sup>

There are other aspects of the front cover which set it apart from mainstream magazines. Along the side of the cover we have details of the volume and edition number which makes this feel more serious, like a **literary journal**. Although it has a title, which acts like a **main coverline**, there are no coverlines. **Coverlines** are usually a way by which the main image and the main feature are anchored and can act as enigmas to entice the reader to look inside. However, without coverlines there is very little to anchor the image: even the title is quite cryptic and assumes prior reader knowledge to **decode**. Without the typical features of a magazine, we very much know that we are dealing with an independent publication that is seeking to set itself apart from the typical.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.adbusters.org/>

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## What's inside?

The edgy, independent feel continues inside the magazine. Many of the images have a whole effect is home-made and almost amateurish, the complete opposite of the like graffiti or protest posters that might be pasted up **surreptitiously**. In many of the features, the images and lettering feel like they are fading away (look at the title of the article 'Save the Planet, Kill Yourself' and the images in the '3 Minutes to Midnight' article), suggesting perhaps that time is running out for the planet.

There is a sense of shock in both the images and the text of the magazine: images of homelessness, imprisonment, poverty and death can be seen throughout, e.g. in the image from the '3 Minutes to Midnight' article (see right). The link between death and capitalism can be seen both in the shock of the title 'Save the Planet, Kill Yourself' and the horror of the dead dog on the 'mock-up' front cover. The playful nature of the magazine can be seen here, too, in the Post-it note – supposedly from the editor – saying 'You must be crazy!!! Nobody will buy this.'

There is an **eclectic**, sometimes confusing, feel to the pages of this magazine. There is a page that is left blank apart from a 'Skip Ad' sign which reinforces the ideology of the magazine as not promoting advertising in any way. When there are advertisements, these have been altered or defaced in some way to create a political and moral message: the Audi advert has a sleek car which is what we would expect, only there is graffiti on its side saying 'Civilisation has a heat engine, there's no escaping the trap we've landed ourselves into.' This approach of **binary opposition** (what we would expect to see in an aspirational advert vs *Adbusters'* subversion of these messages) continues in the TAG Heuer watch advert: the typical image of a celebrity (here, Leonardo DiCaprio) wearing the watch is pasted over an image of riot police and protesters, again reinforcing ideas of oppression and rebellion in a capitalist society.

**Eclectic** – having a broad range of ideas

**Binary opposition** – Levi-Strauss' theory of media texts working on presenting opposite ideas

Elsewhere there are quotes and artwork, excerpts from longer texts and articles, all printed without the polished, precise feel of mainstream magazines and all with a **provocative** edge, questioning how society is run and organised. There is a fridge advert too, which carries the message 'To reach energy parity, Americans must cut their consumption by 85%' and we again see the main image from the front cover, this time over the copy 'time for a radical rethink of what is considered a normal life in the decadent west.'

The irreverent, controversial nature of the magazine can be seen throughout as it aims to undermine, criticise and ultimately destroy Western society.

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### Discussion questions

- 1) Look at the copy from one of the set articles. How does the language used reinforce the magazine towards Western society? Can you list **three** specific examples?
- 2) How can some of the images in the magazine which are not anchored by text be seen as having a potential meaning?
- 3) What do you think is the most shocking, provocative page in the set edition? How has it reinforced the magazine's ideology?



## 11. *Adbusters* and genre

Browsing the supermarket shelves at the magazines on offer, it is easy to see their beauty and fashion, interiors, etc. The different magazines follow the codes and right from their front covers we see beautiful models adorning the fashion magazines, interiors, and so on. Theorist Steve Neale explores the fact that genre works on ideas of repetition and difference: people like to know what to expect from their chosen magazine, but it also needs to have a **USP**, something different that makes it stand out in the market. Whilst this is true of most magazines, what do we make of *Adbusters*? How would we describe its genre?

### Enigmas and enticing audiences

As audiences, we are used to media products enticing us to buy, to watch, etc. With magazines, we expect the front cover to make the genre clear, and the **coverlines** to give us an idea about what is inside but with some sense of **enigma** to entice us in. Not so the *Adbusters* set edition: the cover image seems at odds with other things we might see on the supermarket shelves, with the cover image depicting a man in camouflage with an angry gesture code which seems to distance rather than entice. The aggression is reflected in the **masthead**, 'Adbusters', which connotes destruction but doesn't make its message clear. There are no coverlines, but the title of the edition, 'Post-West', is almost too enigmatic and **elliptical** to hint at the contents, unless you are already familiar with the publication and know what to expect. If you are, then the title, along with the image, connotes the battle we face to move beyond Western society's influence.

### Inside the magazine

When we open up *Adbusters*, the contrast with mainstream magazines is clear, and can be confusing. We are bombarded by myriad images, snippets of text, spoof adverts that overwhelm a little as they are so far away from our usual experience of flicking through a magazine, for example, where the content is clearly organised, with its regular features. Much of *Adbusters* is puzzling and there are few clues to help us decode what is the extract titled 'Chapter Two': there is no **standfirst** introducing what we are about to read, we have disturbing images of people with hoods on, very little text on each page and a variety of quotes. Unlike mainstream magazines, we have to do a lot of work to make links between what we are given and create meaning from it. Once we do decode the section, which focuses on society's over-reliance on mobile phones and the way we willingly give big companies and the government access to our data, it can be satisfying. But, in the same way that the content is challenging in terms of its ideology, so is *Adbusters*' layout.

Some pages seem more conventional: we are used to flicking through magazines often for luxury or aspirational products. At first glance, this seems to be the case: closer inspection, the Audi advert has graffiti across the front of the car, highlighting our use of cars, and the TAG Heuer watch advert has a background image of a city. It is clear that the magazine is using spoof adverts like this to highlight issues in society and ideology. There is even a page left blank apart from the 'Skip Ad' copy to reinforce

This pattern of seeming randomness continues throughout the magazine, and our work with the graffiti and quotes. We work hard as readers to decode, make links and understand much of the content. But that's the point: the magazine resists the idea of being a straightforward thought-provoking, challenging and ultimately, as its strapline suggests, 'a journal

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## Defining a genre

So what genre IS *Adbusters*? The website pronounces itself, as we have seen, as 'an environment'<sup>8</sup>, which is almost as elliptical as the front cover! However, it professes to be a magazine. We're a global collective of writers, artists, designers, musicians, poets, etc. Again, not much help! Do a quick Google search and it's described as anything from a 'cultural and culture jamming magazine' (there's even one blog that describes it as a satirical magazine, yes, but not sure how humorous its pages are as a rule). It could be seen as an example of **genre hybridity**: it is informative, it raises awareness of important issues, and it satirises and shocks. But the overarching ideology is of anti-capitalism and environmentalism, being both a publication that raises awareness but also one that provokes and shocks and ultimately is a call to action. It suggests to its readers that: 'We're trying to forge a new way of living, create a world without the capitalist paradigm and halt humanity's slide into a 10,000-year dark age'.<sup>10</sup> Its content is not something a reader should do lightly. A reader should prepare to

### Discussion questions

- 1) From your analysis of the magazine, which pages seem the most unconventional when compared to mainstream magazines? Choose one page and explain how you might decode its message.
- 2) Could you explain to a person who has never seen *Adbusters* what genre of magazine it is, based on your definition based on your study.
- 3) Compare the front cover of *Adbusters* with the other independent magazine options, *The* etc. How are they similar and different? How clear is it from the front covers that these are independent magazines?

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.adbusters.org/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.adbusters.org/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.adbusters.org/>

## 12. *Adbusters* ideology

### ***Adbusters*: more than just a magazine**

In an interview in 1996, co-founder of *Adbusters*, Kalle Lasn, explained their aims: 'What we're trying to do is pioneer a new form of **social activism** using all the power of the mass media to sell ideas rather than products.'<sup>11</sup> This really sums up the ideology behind this independent magazine, which has as its subtitle, 'journal of the mental environment'. Huge claims here: that the magazine aims to change its readers' opinions and ideas about Western society.

### **How it all started: logging and protest**

*Adbusters'* origin story is an interesting one. Its co-founder, Kalle Lasn, was born in the USA, had a career as a documentary film-maker, settling eventually in Canada. In 1989, the forest industry in British Columbia (a Canadian province) was facing criticism from many quarters and decided to launch an advertising campaign.

Horried by the idea of something as environmentally damaging as this being promoted by a wilderness cinematographer Bill Schmalz and other activists, created a counter-advertising campaign. That TV stations refused to air it, there were so many protests as a result of Lasn's activism that the forestry industry adverts were cancelled.

Buoyed by this success, Lasn and fellow activists founded the *Adbusters* Media Foundation, with the magazine as its main product. Initially the magazine was a local Vancouver **quarterly magazine**, produced by volunteers and with a **circulation** of 5,000. By 2017 it had become the recognisable **bi-monthly journal** it is today with a worldwide readership of 120,000. Even though the company now sells its products to over 60 countries, their editorial staff is still small and the company relies on freelancers and even readers for content.

### **Bucking the trend: the not-for-profit magazine**

*Adbusters* is a magazine like no other. It prides itself on being not-for-profit: unlike many modern magazines it receives no revenue from advertising but rather covers production costs through sales and subscriptions. This subverts Curran and Seaton's power and media industry theory as *Adbusters* is not driven by profit. It is clear on the website that cover sales alone are not enough to keep the company afloat. A tab on the navigation bar, making it easy for supporters to give up to \$100 (or more) to support the *Adbusters* Media Foundation has grown, now encompassing a website as well as a magazine. (The *Adbusters* Media Foundation is also an Advocacy Advertising Agency) which helps non-profit causes by creating advertising campaigns. Like *The Big Issue* in the UK, the activist magazine is more about ideals than profit.

### **'We will wreck this world'**

But what exactly are these ideals? Lasn is very vocal in his promotion of the cause. He claims that 'we will wreck this world'<sup>12</sup> and his magazine makes it clear that hatred of the system, and the desire to destroy it, is at the heart of what they do. The idea that Western society is too much for the planet and the USA in particular comes under the strongest criticism: 'America, the great power, is being liberated from itself – from its own excesses and arrogance. And the world is being liberated from American values and culture, spreading across the planet as if by divine providence.' The magazine is full of such messages, from articles with the disturbing headline 'Save the Planet, Kill the Culture'. It openly criticises major companies such as McDonald's and Nike (known as culture

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.thewhitereview.org/feature/interview-with-kalle-lasn/>

<sup>12</sup> Kalle Lasn, *Culture Jam: How to Reverse America's Suicidal Consumer Binge*, Harper Collins, 2001

<sup>13</sup> Kalle Lasn, *Culture Jam: How to Reverse America's Suicidal Consumer Binge*, Harper Collins, 2001

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## Readers as political activists

*Adbusters* is not just a magazine whose purpose is to be flicked through by its readers, but it is deliberately **consciousness-raising**. It aims to bring important environmental and anti-consumerist messages to its readers and, in turn, expects its readers to respond to its messages. On the *Adbusters* website, its potential subscribers are told: 'When you subscribe to *Adbusters*, you are joining a network of artists and activists committed to speaking truth to power without reservation.'<sup>14</sup> This 'network... speaking truth to power without reservation' includes campaigns that *Adbusters* runs, from the Occupy Wall Street campaign in 2011 to the TV Turnoff Week (established in 1992) and the Unbranded Week. More recently it has run an Unbranded Week started with an ad in the *New York Times* and planned a TV message, although all it. As its website proudly announces, 'we've been at the helm of our era's defining

Jeremy Leslie, founder of magCulture, highlights the power independent magazines of the indies has reminded the mainstream publishers of the strengths of the magazine: 'It's about your speciality is and building tight relationships with a smaller group of readers than quantity!'<sup>17</sup> Quirky and unusual it is in everything it does, *Adbusters* is certainly and use all elements at its disposal to raise awareness of its environmental and anti-

### Discussion questions

- 1) Do some further research into the life and career of Kalle Lasn. Make a note of five key actions, quotes, etc.) that help us to understand his viewpoints and ideology.
- 2) Explore the *Adbusters* website: <https://www.adbusters.org/> (**Adbusters Media Foundation** **Environment**). Which elements represent the Adbusters Media Foundation as subversive?

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.adbusters.org/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.adbusters.org/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.adbusters.org/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.fipp.com/news/magculture-founder-jeremy-leslie-on-what-independent-magazines>



## 'Ecological catastrophe' and the reader

The idea of 'ecological catastrophe' is continued in the article with the shocking title 'You're Not Alone, You're Not Yourself'. The use of **direct address** throughout the article challenges the reader to distance ourselves from the 'assault of the ecosphere' that is all around us. The article presents a scenario: 'you are waiting in line at the checkout lane of your local supermarket'... 'surrounded' create a feeling of claustrophobia as we are told there is no escape from a world about to overwhelm humanity. The article cleverly focuses on everything we might find in a supermarket, from the 'fluorescent illuminated mini-fridge filled with soft-drinks' to 'gossip rags' on the shelves, and then proceeds to explain how everything we see has a catastrophic effect on the environment. Theorist David Gauntlett suggests that we use media to construct our identities; however, the way this article is written almost seems to be telling us how we should be feeling and responding and giving us no alternative view.

As we might expect from *Adbusters*, big companies such as Coca-Cola are afforded little sympathy. The corn industry which 'is almost single-handedly responsible for the rise of neonicotinoids of causing colony collapse in bees and general declines in bird populations.' The use of phrases such as 'what's disturbing' and 'what's really terrifying' reinforces the sense of horror. The article tells us the environment even 'when you are stuck in a soul-crushingly boring line in the supermarket'.

The article is not without hope, though. The last paragraph offers 'good news' and 'do something'. Short sentences and imperatives are repeated in this paragraph to encourage action: 'look around you... Make your choice.' A sense of urgency is created when it says 'It's time to go.' If we have fears we are told 'Embrace them. Don't be afraid. Change them.'

## *Adbusters* and the anti-capitalist movement

Capitalism, the idea of businesses being run for profit, is part of Western culture. In the twentieth century, there were many people who spoke out against capitalism and commercialism – the idea of society being obsessed with buying 'stuff'. This is the heart of *Adbusters*' ideology.

The readers' page reflects the magazine's pervading concern with the way society is. Flint's letter proudly announces that her local area (Bristol) is 'renowned for its independence' and states that when 'Tesco attempted to open a grocery store' there were 'riots'. This is the heart of what the magazine does: we've already looked at examples such as 'Against Nike stores' and the 'Buy Nothing Day'. Kalle Lasn is very clear that '[the magazine] is not about products'<sup>20</sup> (even though the website does have a 'culture shop' selling books and T-shirts).

The anti-commercialism movement really gained momentum in the early 2000s, with the film *No Logo* and the film *The Corporation* highlighting the growth of capitalism and big business. Naomi Klein is particularly scathing about the way big businesses manipulate the brand Tommy Hilfiger's marketing policy: 'Like so much of cool hunting, Hilfiger's brand is the alienation at the heart of America's race relations: selling white youth on their fetishization of black youth on their fetishization of white wealth.'<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> <https://www.activistfacts.com/organizations/36-adbusters/>

<sup>21</sup> Naomi Klein, *No Logo*, Flamingo, 2000

## Fighting commercialism

Right from its inception, *Adbusters* has been fighting against what it sees as the evil of encouraging its readers not only to resist the 'brainwashing' of advertising which promotes unethical products but to actively rebel. The latest incarnation of the website (at [www.adbusters.org/](http://www.adbusters.org/)) says 'capital will commodify every inch of this planet' and the danger of this is what the magazine wants its readers to act against. Creating spoof adverts as a way of raising awareness and action is at the heart of what the foundation stands for. Lasn said, 'We're going to target the chemical companies, the food industries, the fashion corporations and the polluting free-information environment... we want auto executives to feel just as squeezed as the small business executives. We want them to have a hard time looking their kids in the eye and explaining their job for a living.'<sup>22</sup> Seeing the success of the anti-tobacco industry movement, Lasn wrote *Adbusters* as a business. The set edition is filled with images and text which are critical of big corporations like Apple. The reader is encouraged to act and is told to expect struggle: 'You're fighting a giant. There will be plenty of times when you just won't want to.'

The power of businesses to affect consumers' behaviour and our willingness to go along with it is seen in the 'Chapter 2' extract. There are disturbing images of people who seem to be glued to their heads as they are focused solely on their mobile phones, whether in their beds or in public places. The significance of the power mobile phones have is made clear in the quote from Schneier: 'Imagine if the US government passed a law requiring all citizens to carry a tracking device. The rest of the quote provides a clever binary opposition between the freedom and privacy we have and the control we give up. Schneier reminds us that we 'carry our cell phones everywhere' and 'we provide our data to our email service providers, our cell phone companies, our social networking platform providers.' Our reliance on our mobile phones gives companies, and ultimately the government, power over our lives.

## Action not words

The most high-profile direct action encouraged by *Adbusters* was the Occupy Wall Street in 2011. Wall Street is the centre of America's financial markets and therefore a symbol of capitalism and corporate culture, something that made it an ideal target for *Adbusters*. Inspired by protest movements around the world, the magazine encouraged its readers to take action: 'we want to see 20,000 people in Manhattan, set up tents, kitchens, peaceful barricades and occupy Wall Street for 99 days. We shall incessantly repeat one simple demand in a plurality of voices.'<sup>23</sup> Its goal? To challenge the commission tasked with ending the influence money has over our representatives. The action lasted until 15<sup>th</sup> November and during the action between 1,000 and 15,000 protesters were present. Whether the movement was a success is debatable: there are arguments on both sides.

This approach makes *Adbusters* feel unique, more a social movement than simply a magazine to read, and deliberately so: throughout its pages, and its website, it makes readers aware of the choices we make, the products we buy, and encourages us not only to act against those who are selling us a particular lifestyle. It is challenging us to change our lives.

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### Discussion questions

- 1) Environmentalism is at the heart of the magazine's ideology. What examples can you find in the spoof adverts from both the set edition and the magazine?
- 2) Do you think there is a disconnect between the ideology of the magazine and the fact that it is asking us to buy from and subscribe to its publication and products?
- 3) Use the Internet to find out more detail about the Occupy Wall Street and other protests. How successful do you think the foundation has been in promoting its ideology?

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.activistfacts.com/>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.adbusters.org/>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.adbusters.org/>

## 14. 'Culture jamming': subversion and *Adbusters*

In her influential book, *No Logo*, Naomi Klein explains culture jamming as 'the practice of subverting advertisements and hijacking billboards in order to drastically alter their messages'. The term has been coined by the San Francisco rock band Negativland, and this is something that *Adbusters*: indeed, it is one of its main approaches to undermining Western culture.

Culture jamming can be seen widely in modern media as organisations seek to criticise corporate messages from big businesses to governments. If you've seen the film *Fight Club* (which is highly recommended) you'll recognise the idea of attempting to destroy capitalist society and undermining (in the film, the group's attempts become increasingly extreme). In *Adbusters*, Bruce Grierson, cites the film as 'the first mainstream movie (in part) about the

The importance of culture jamming as a way to undermine authority is clear when we look at *Culture Jam: How to Reverse America's Suicidal Consumer Binge – and Why We Must* by Lasnik. Lasnik arms for his supporters (the **modal verb** 'must' reinforces the necessity as Lasnik sees it).

### Culture jamming: adverts in the magazine

In the magazine, culture jamming can be seen throughout its spoof adverts (often referred to as **subvertisements**) and the most powerful has to be the spoof Louboutin advert. Christian Louboutin sells high-end shoes: a quick look on the website shows shoes that range from £580 to nearly £1,500 (a tote bag can set you back over £1,000). This kind of consumer excess is exactly what *Adbusters* despises and seeks to undermine in its publication.

So, if we look at the double-page spread we see the trademark red Louboutin logo. However, instead of luxury shoes accompanying this logo we see an image of a pair of dusty, cracked feet in an arid, African landscape. On the feet are 'shoes' made from crushed plastic bottles and fastened with ragged strips of material. The image is stark and shocking and this is exactly the effect intended on the reader: we are meant to be horrified at the conditions depicted and the poverty on show. Below the image is the slogan 'red soles are always in season'. This is a reference to the distinctive red soles that are part of the luxury fashion brand's identity (Louboutin saw an assistant painting her nails red and it gave him the idea to use red soles rather than the blander, more typical alternatives). However, here it is a cutting criticism of the brand that sells ridiculously expensive shoes when people live in such extreme poverty. The red soles here are the grazed and damaged feet caused by wearing such unsuitable 'shoes'. The use of 'always' reinforces the idea that there is never any escape from this situation for those like the person depicted. Powerful stuff that makes you think about your need for those expensive trainers that everyone else is wearing.

The message continues on the opposite page with an image composed of two very different parts. The top image is overlaid on the lower image in a collage style, showing that a very deliberate message has been constructed.

*Adbusters*

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<sup>25</sup> Naomi Klein, *No Logo*, Flamingo, 2000

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.activistfacts.com/organizations/36-adbusters/>



The lower image is the kind we expect when we think of the Louboutin brand, and we see a catwalk model walking down a runway dressed in red and wearing red shoes (the colour links from the logo and the slogan on the previous page and we therefore make the connection in terms of ideas... definitely Barthes' semantic code at work here to create meaning). As we would expect with culture jamming, the top image is very different. In stark contrast to everything else on the double-page spread, it is in black and white and is grainier than the other images (adding a level of **verisimilitude**).

This feels more like **reportage**, an image of the real world rather than something deliberately constructed for an advert.

The image shows what appear to be refugees, held behind barbed wire.

Their facial expressions are emotional and desperate and we are drawn to one man in particular, holding a small child in one hand and holding his other arm out in a pleading gesture. The two images are

cleverly placed on the page so that the top half of the man is joined to the bottom

**Verisimilitude** – the appearance of reality in a media text



**Reportage** – a media text that has the same style as a newspaper or television news report



We are being encouraged to make a connection between these two **binary oppos** that, with our society's focus on luxury, consumerism and pampering, we are imm outside our experience. The whole double-page spread makes us uncomfortable: consumerism is a way of life, we forget those who live in poverty or are oppressed the point of culture jamming: to make us feel uncomfortable, to make us question to make us change.

## Water: those who have and have not

Culture jamming also works in terms of placement. Another double-page spread two seemingly unconnected items on opposite pages: on one, there is a quote from Norman Gall, an American reporter and expert on Latin America; on the other, an advert for a Zucchetti tap, another luxury brand. But obviously, with *Adbusters*, we are encouraged to make connections and the message becomes clear.

The image on the left-hand page is of a woman in a bath, looking at her water-wrinkled hands; the gesture code – both hands together and palms raised – feels like a plea. The edges of the image, like many in the magazine, seem to be disappearing: again, the message that time is running out. For once, there is text anchor the image: the quote from Gall describes the daily life of people in Osasco (a city in Brazil) who have to 'collect water buckets from faucets that flow for only three hours daily' and who run the risk of 'diarrhoea and other intestinal diseases from the polluted water. Gall goes on to discuss the effect of lack of water in businesses, schools and hospitals: all aspects of people's lives are affected by this water scarcity.

Once we have understood the message of this page, the placement of the Zucche advert becomes clear. The advert consists of a sleek, bronze tap, from which flow beautiful clean water in an opulent black-and-white bathroom. The advert bears the title 'Him': the tap, all angles, and the monochrome background feel masculine and sleek. This is a bathroom targeted at a luxury market as opposed to the poverty suggested by the image and text of the previous page. **The binary oppos** created here makes the message clear: people can afford luxury products that supply plentiful water whilst others struggle, risking disease and even death to access the same commodity. Positioned as they are, the advert, which we might have skimmed past without a thought in a different magazine, seems tasteless and makes us uncomfortable.

**Binary opposite** – the idea (developed by texts work on the juxtaposition (placing opposite ideas

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## Culture jamming: actions not thoughts

Culture jamming in the magazine goes beyond adverts designed to make us think and the environment. Actions are encouraged by the reader which are intended to challenge capitalism.

In the July/August 2001 edition of the magazine, 'The Smell of Swoosh' encourages readers to go to Nike stores, and in the September/October 2002 edition, readers are told 'Culture jamming is a low level. When you and your friends organize a street party, liberate a billboard, or take down a sign of authority. We want people all over the world to see it the next day on *adbusters*'.

Add this to the more widespread campaigns such as Occupy Wall Street and Buy Nothing Day. *Adbusters* certainly seems more a radical anti-capitalist movement than simply a magazine. However, some have felt that *Adbusters* doesn't go far enough: a splinter group based in Melbourne organized a 'Buy Nothing Day' as, according to Brant Cheetham (*Adbusters*'s general manager), 'Too white middle-class'.

### Discussion questions

- 1) Look through the set edition and find other examples of culture jamming. How do they reinforce the magazine's anti-capitalist ideology?
- 2) Search the idea of 'culture jamming' on the Internet. What examples can you find, and what do they say about the anti-capitalist movement?
- 3) Use the *Adbusters* website to find examples of spoof ads. Choose two which you think have been successful. Complete a semiotic analysis of both.

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## 15. *Adbusters*: niche audiences and specialised content

There is no doubt that *Adbusters* attracts a **specialised audience**: with peak **circulation** of 120,000 in the 2000s and 60,000 in 2022, this is definitely not a mainstream magazine. We can compare it with the circulation figures of 190,249 for *Vogue* in 2022 to see the difference in audience. The target audience is **niche**: due to the challenging content and layout, it is not going to appeal to everyone. Readers that like something unusual, a little post-modern and, of course, those that are concerned about the state of society, climate change, consumerism and capitalism are going to be interested in what *Adbusters* has to offer. But to read / subscribe to *Adbusters*, you need to be committed: it's not for your casual reader.

### *Adbusters* and the power of the hashtag

Theorist Henry Jenkins talks about media audiences as part of a **participatory culture**, which links to the idea of them being active rather than **passive consumers**. The idea of a community is something that *Adbusters* encourages: many of their campaigns contain hashtags (e.g. #BoycottShoppers and #WhiteHouseSiege) with the view that their supporters will share the hashtag on social media to raise awareness of the cause.

Whilst this is a way of supporters and subscribers feeling part of a wider community who are effecting change, the use of social media can also bring its detractors, often with sinister overtones. In 2020, worried about the presidential elections, *Adbusters* called its supporters to march on and lay siege to the White House. In its Tactical Briefing #1 on its website (which uses the language of a military campaign), *Adbusters* tells its supporters 'we and tens of thousands of our fellow citizens will stream into Lafayette Square, in Washington. D.C. We will lay siege to the White House. And we will sustain it for exactly fifty days. This is the #WhiteHouseSiege.'<sup>27</sup> The constant use of the hashtag on its website encourages its supporters to use it on their own social media posts. But some people objected to this coverage and to *Adbusters'* intentions: in a chilling email to the foundation, a critic of the organisation said, 'You think everyone in America is afraid of you. Trust me before this bullshit you be afraid of us. We will not be shooting teargas or rubber bullets at you. It will be on their website feels like a call for solidarity amongst its followers. This sense of need to change the hashtag halfway through the campaign: 'the hashtag #WhiteHouseSiege' on Facebook and is not likely to survive for long on other social-media platforms. Our WHS-related posts with the hashtag #ReOccupy. Stay safe.'<sup>29</sup> The final imperative like *Adbusters* is addressing its foot soldiers, who are embarking on a difficult fight

This sense of community, of an albeit niche army of followers who are keen to fight clever on *Adbusters'* part in terms of garnering support. Whilst the individual reader may live their life, in articles such as 'Save the Planet, Kill Yourself', it can seem too insignificant. When the writer, Villaverde, tells readers to 'Change. Create alternative in your own community and fight to make them the norm' it can feel like an idealism an army of supporters, all sharing the same goal (the 'we' of many of *Adbusters'* posts)

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.adbusters.org/>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.adbusters.org/>

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.adbusters.org/>

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## Your magazine too

There are other, less extreme ways that *Adbusters* makes its readers feel part of a encouraging readers (like many magazines do) to write in with their views. In this are able to share their viewpoints on issues raised. In the set edition, the letters c two letters set side by side that represent two quite different viewpoints in respo and values. The first, from Sarah Flint of Bristol, presents a pride in her local area intolerance for commercialism.' She shares a photo of a billboard in her area (the has written 'The joy of being / Advertised nothing'). In her letter she says, 'I thou magazine. Feel free to use the image.' The fact that *Adbusters* publishes the image lower down the page would be an example of Sarah being a **prosumer** (a term used by theorist Clay Shirky) as Sarah is not just commenting on content, she is creating it.

The second letter, from Jennifer Jamieson of Perth, Australia (which shows the international reach of the magazine: it has subscribers in 60 countries), presents a different viewpoint. Rather than feeling satisfied with what she sees around her, she feels people need to go further to 'solve or heal the existent She suggests the urgency of our need to 'STOP. Stop buying their garbage, stop su practices, their contempt for our health...' and so on. Like the magazine itself, she using the inclusive pronoun 'we' and advocates more extreme action. She says 'ir real/creative/understanding/thoughtful.' By presenting these differing viewpoint range of its readers and supporters, allowing anyone reading the magazine to find though, that Jennifer's letter is placed AFTER Sarah's, maybe aligning more with A further, being more extreme. Maybe its placement is saying don't just settle and push yourself out of the 'strange trance trap of consumption'.

## Prosumers?

In the last section, we saw a small way readers can contribute to the magazine and talks about. *Adbusters*, unlike most magazines, mainstream OR independent, active contribute both articles and images to the magazine. So, not only are the readers viewpoints and ideologies expressed in the magazine, but they can be active contr 'Adbusters is moving towards a pseudo-comic book aesthetic, full of memes, paint cartoons, personal anecdotes, insightful observation, and inspired journalism. Fun we want it. Have something provocative in mind? Show us.'<sup>30</sup> It's a powerful way

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### Discussion questions

- 1) Look through the set edition of *Adbusters*. In which ways are readers made to feel like p Look in particular at the use of language.
- 2) Look through different social media platforms. Find three examples of hashtags used by viewpoints and ideologies.
- 3) Look at a variety of social media posts. Find three examples of *Adbusters* encouraging a and ideology (Instagram is a good place to start). Find examples of any oppositional res How do these examples support Clay Shirky's idea of the prosumer?

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.adbusters.org/>

## 16. *Adbusters* and audience response: accepting the

As we've discussed elsewhere in this pack, *Adbusters* is not an easy read. It challenges lives, to reject consumerism and to take direct action to make their viewpoint clear. Is it too far? Might some readers find the magazine overly 'preachy' and unrelentingly

### Stuart Hall and audience response

Theorist Stuart Hall, in his audience response theory, explores the different ways of reading a text. The **preferred reading** is the one that the text producers encode and means we accept what the producer is presenting. Contrasting this is an **oppositional reading**, and this is what the reader produces, based on our own personal values and responses to what we are reading. A third is the **negotiated reading**, where the reader accepts the message in part but adapts it to their own values and experiences. It is quite easy to see how a reader might have any of the above values in *Adbusters*.

Indeed, Canada's largest magazine retailer, Shoppers Drug Mart, removed *Adbusters* because of its graphic content, an action which enraged the magazine, who launched the #BoycottShoppers hashtag. The sarcasm and vitriol in their response is clear, as is the effect, being silenced: 'Is this how truth-telling journalism dies — at the hands of a corporation that doesn't like naughty words or knowing how their beef gets made? Or are there other reasons?' However enraged *Adbusters* is, this is a clear example of an oppositional response.

Despite being banned from Canada's shelves, retailers do not have the same power as governments. *Adbusters* was free not only to protest against the action but to continue to publish. Regulating online content is much more difficult than regulating other forms of media. Theorists Livingstone and Lunt. Look on the website (at the time of writing) and you will find it for its nuclear programme, capitalist society generally and the crimes of colonisation uncompromising and often shocking, and deliberately so (at the end of the article on society the feelings of the disillusioned are expressed through the quote: 'Fuck it.'). The constraints are placed on *Adbusters* in terms of their print product and even their TV presence. If they wanted to put an anti-consumerist advert on TV the main outlets wouldn't run it. The opportunity to promote their ideology online using whatever language and images

### Double standards?

This ideology, and the way *Adbusters* promotes it, has come under criticism from those who see it as representing an oppositional response to the magazine. In early issues there were complaints about things such as why the magazine wasn't printed on recycled paper. It has been criticised by the likes of Naomi Klein, in her book *No Logo*, who said: 'At times, *Adbusters* is only slightly hipper version of a Public Service Announcement about saying no to corporations. It's about to Reduce, Reuse and Recycle.'<sup>33</sup> Klein also quotes American writer Mark Dery in his introduction to the publication because it feels patronising to its readers 'as if "the masses" cannot be trusted to make their own desires'. So, not everyone is convinced by the *Adbusters* message.

#### Fact file

Naomi Klein is a Canadian journalist, writer and political activist. She is also an academic. On her website she is 'UBC Professor of Climate Justice (tenured) at the University of British Columbia (Geography Dept.)'. Her books include *No Logo* (2000), *This Changes Everything* (2014) and *No Is Not Enough: Resisting the New Shock Politics and Winning the World* (2019).

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.adbusters.org/>

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.adbusters.org/>

<sup>33</sup> Naomi Klein, *No Logo*, Flamingo, 2000

In interviews with *Adbusters'* founder, Kalle Lasn, it is clear to see how people might be patronising and the founder even hypocritical. When asked in an interview if he was pure, his answer was yes: Lasn describes this fact as 'embarrassing' and says he is 'just a wimp'. 'I'm not pure, and I don't feel like I want to be all that pure.'<sup>34</sup> So frequenting McDonald's, the founder of a magazine that was taken off the shelves for publishing images of cows, is not enough to shock its readers into action. The man who described cars as 'the most destructive product ever produced' drives one himself, describing its benefits as 'convenience, the time I save, the freedom given the lack of 'viable alternatives'.<sup>35</sup> It can be hard to reconcile this with the headline in the set edition with the anchoring copy 'Concerns about hotter summers may tempt me to stop driving, but it does not stop me from driving my car.' The feeling of double standards may lead to an oppositional reading of the magazine. Obviously, Lasn and the producers of *Adbusters* are expected to respond positively to the anti-capitalist messages in the magazine (preferred readings of Lasn's views (as outlined above) may lead the reader to accept the general message and decide that support for the causes does not necessarily mean the reader has to change their lifestyle (negotiated reading)).

### Discussion questions

- 1) Look again at the spoof Louboutin advert in the set edition. How would you describe the message?
- 2) Explore the *Adbusters* website. Which sections of this do you think people might have access to?
- 3) Having studied the set edition of the magazine, how would you describe your own response?

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<sup>34</sup> <https://www.activistfacts.com/organizations/36-adbusters/>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.activistfacts.com/organizations/36-adbusters/>

## 17. The discerning reader: *Adbusters* and cultural capital

**Cultural capital**, according to sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, is the idea that class power is not just about money but about 'cultural assets' (this means the knowledge, experiences, etc. that ensure success). But why is this idea important in our study of *Adbusters*? Because, when we look at the content, from its dense text, range of quotes and its use of art, we can see that the editorial team is expecting a certain kind of reader: one who can understand and access the **cultural references**. It is a magazine that demands a lot from its readers.

As said elsewhere, the magazine **subverts** our expectations of the genre. What we see as we flick through the pages can seem confusing, challenging, and even nonsensical. Many quotes and images are presented with nothing to **anchor** them: we are expected to understand the references, we are expected to recognise where quotes and images have come from.

The images alone require a level of understanding that suggests an educated reader: the set edition contains artwork by Picasso, a modern artist, alongside a detail from a Renaissance painting of Christ on the cross. There is a series of photographs of classical sculpture alongside a quote on the purpose of abstraction in art by German art historian Wilhelm Worringer. There is very little **anchorage** and the reader has to do a lot of work to think about why these images and quotes have been included. In places, the meaning of the artwork is clearer: there is an image which seems to be by modern artist Kandinsky, but the text explains that it is indeed computer generated. The magazine is stating that computers are able to complete more and more complex tasks, but without the reader having knowledge of the artwork of Kandinsky, the point the magazine is making is less effective.

The magazine is littered with quotes from a wide variety of sources – literary, historical, political. It includes quotes from Irish writer James Joyce and American author Ken Kesey, alongside of Payam Akhavan and anti-slavery protester Sojourner Truth. Some of the historical references are obscure and they link to the general themes of inequality and protest that pervade the magazine. Readers find ourselves trying to analyse some of the more abstract literary quotes and trying to find a lesson to understand their meaning!

Images of politicians are frequent, as we would expect from an anti-capitalist protest magazine. We can identify some of them, like Trump, Obama and maybe Hillary Clinton, but we're expected to have enough knowledge to understand images such as the cartoon of Donald Trump playing rugby and being supported by a variety of world leaders, with others watching on. Equally, references to Direct Action, which includes quotes referencing Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders, require our knowledge of US politics is extensive and we understand the references made.

The entirety of *Adbusters* is challenging and assumes so much prior knowledge (cultural capital if you like). It suggests an **ABC1 audience of reformers** who come to the magazine with an extensive prior knowledge of the arts, culture and politics in order to decode the messages and values being presented. It makes for a challenge, certainly, but it can be too dense and confusing for the casual reader.

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### Discussion questions

- 1) What does the magazine gain from aiming its content at such a **niche audience** (a very small audience of text receivers)?
- 2) Choose one of the images from the set product and explain the cultural knowledge needed to understand it.
- 3) Do you think the magazine would be more successful if it aimed its content at a wider audience?

## Show What You Know

In the exam, you will be given either a question on both set products together (worth 30 marks) or a question on each individual text (both worth 15 marks).

There is no necessity to compare texts, but this might be useful when evaluating texts for Component 2. Sometimes there will be a named theory to engage with: it is important to decide which theories to include in your answer.

With this in mind, here are some practice essay questions for you to consider. Have a go at answering them using the knowledge you have gained.

- 1) How useful is a semiotic approach to studying magazines?  
Refer to *Woman* and *Adbusters* in your response.
- 2) 'Magazines are significantly influenced by the contexts in which they are produced.' How evident is this in *Woman* and *Adbusters*?
- 3) Evaluate the idea that the magazine industry, like other media industries, is controlled by a few powerful people and power.  
Refer to *Woman* and *Adbusters* in your response.
- 4) Explore how *Adbusters* magazine targets and attracts a specialised audience.
- 5) Discuss the representations of gender in the set edition of *Woman* magazine.

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# Answers

## Discussion questions

### 2. Semiotic analysis of *Woman*

- 1) Students might look at the images of women who fit the beauty standard of the 1960s with their appearance. There are suggestions (in the creme puff advert) that looking at language there is a reinforcement of gender stereotypes, particularly in the Hitchcock advert having 'hidden depths' and again being seen in terms of their attractiveness to men. Adverts such as the one for the WRAC, which somewhat subverts these stereotypes and the use of direct address on the front cover and inside the magazine creates an intimacy with readers, making it feel more like a chat or a conversation. Lots of the coverlines' language is directed at the reader: words such as 'improvements', and questions such as 'Are you an A-Level beauty?'. Students will find that the modern *Woman* magazine uses multiple cover images, making the focus of the magazine now. The colours are much bolder and more vibrant (discuss modern printing practices here). There is a similar focus on beauty and lifestyle.

### 3. The changing role of women: domesticity vs liberation (*Woman*)

- 1) Students should focus on the role of men here. During the war, with men away fighting, women entered the labour market which meant that women were encouraged to fill these roles – in factories, etc. Once the men came back from war, women were no longer needed to fill these roles and returned to their pre-war domesticity so that men could take up their jobs again. Many women resisted at the thought of giving up this freedom, so the media played a huge role in making this transition. The main stereotype, from the Tide advert, was the housewife. She is seen as glamorous at home and the products available to make her life even easier. The film poster, *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang*, contrasts it as it presents women as femme fatales or, even worse, as monstrous if they have too much power over men.
- 2) The main stereotype, from the Tide advert, was the housewife. She is seen as glamorous at home and the products available to make her life even easier. The film poster, *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang*, contrasts it as it presents women as femme fatales or, even worse, as monstrous if they have too much power over men.
- 3) Students should notice that women are invariably represented as having roles in the home or as being glamorous, weak and reliant on men. There is very little diversity in these roles, reflecting the beauty standards of the 1960s.

### 4. Myths of femininity: the representation of women in the magazine (*Woman*)

- 1) Students should point to the idea that women were expected to care about their appearance (in the kitchen article, for example) and often this is linked to the idea of being attractive for men. In the kitchen article, women do have more of a sense of agency, although this is presented in a way that suggests that women are reliant on men to help with the housework. In the WRAC advert, there is more a sense of agency.
- 2) The importance of being an 'A-Level beauty' suggests that beauty is something to be achieved through hard work at making themselves beautiful. The magazine includes reference to and images of famous women like Audrey Hepburn and Grace Kelly, who present a very homogenised view of beauty.
- 3) Students should notice more variety in the cover models of modern magazines although the relative sizes of the women used.

### 5. Women in a man's world? Hegemonic power and representation of women (*Woman*)

- 1) Students may not see this exact opposition but they might notice representations of women as making themselves attractive (in the kitchen article, for example) alongside women as making themselves attractive. In the kitchen article, there is a sense of women being reliant on men to help with the housework. In the WRAC advert, there is more a sense of agency.
- 2) There are so many interesting adverts students can choose from. Many of them represent women as superior to men and conversely represent women as reliant on men and often as a result of this, they are portrayed as being less attractive.
- 3) The fact that this is not a high-end glossy magazine (such as *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair*) is significant (around the C1C2). Housewives and single women are targeted at various points in the magazine, reflecting the aspiration in some of the articles and the celebrities that are used.

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6. **It's a man's world... isn't it? Men and *Woman***
  - 1) Students will find a mixture in the magazine. Men as dynamic and powerful (the creator of the world). In both of these sections of the magazine, women are seen as reliant on men or want for men.
  - 2) Students should be free to make notes on whichever articles they like, but they would need to show some agency, and the article on men suggests some sense of superiority, there is much to discuss.
  - 3) Discussion should be based on students' own research.
7. **Advertising: post-war stereotypes or changing roles? (*Woman*)**
  - 1) Students should identify lots of focus on the home, children, pets, meals, etc. There is a sense of the *Woman* reader as a housewife and mother who is aspirational and wants the best for her family.
  - 2) There is a sense that the 1960s reader would be much more accepting of the messages. A 1950s/1960s reader might take an oppositional response to the idea of women making the home happy in the domestic sphere.
  - 3) Again, discussion should be based on students' own research. It is likely, given the year of the magazine, the beginning of the second wave of feminism, most of their research would reinforce the idea that there will be some messages that suggest women are becoming more independent.
8. **IPC: the magazine giant! (*Woman*)**
  - 1) The main problem with monopolies is lack of competition. This can lead to higher prices and less original ideas. Students might also discuss the idea of lazy journalism.
  - 2) Ideas might include: lack of competition might lead to the reinforcement of traditional roles. Also, as more women joined the workforce, they might have less time to engage with magazines or find it less relevant to their lives.
  - 3) Students will identify companies such as Bauer Media, Immediate Media and Future. As part of the industry, there is so much more diversity of genre. They might also look at how they meet the needs of a modern reader.
9. **A woman's place...? Audiences and cultivation in *Woman***
  - 1) Discussion based on students' own research.
  - 2) There is a sense of agency in the WRAC advert as women having a career is promoted. The article about as having a more active role to play in the kitchen article.
  - 3) Students will have a variety of responses to this. Some may agree and be able to cite evidence from the messages. Others may feel that a theory developed in the 1950s and 1960s is dated. They might also look at theorists such as Gauntlett who discuss the complexity of modern representation.
10. **Semiotic analysis of *Adbusters***
  - 1) There are many examples students could use. 'Save the Planet, Kill Yourself' has many examples of how critical the magazine is towards Western society. Emotive language such as 'ecological disaster' gives a sense of the disaster facing the planet. Then, by contrast, the criticism levelled at the magazine is vicious.
  - 2) Again, there are many examples students can choose from. The Picasso chicken, for example, is simply crowing, when placed next to some of the other images on successive pages, it seems to cry for help for a planet suffering.
  - 3) Responses based on students' own research.
11. ***Adbusters* and genre**
  - 1) and 2) Responses based on students' own research and ideas.
  - 3) Huck has a similar feel to *Adbusters*, even down to the camouflaged figure on the front cover. The challenge in terms of decoding the messages is also similar. The *Big Issue* is very different. It is a celebration. Whilst it also has an individual feel, there is more in terms of the content. It gives a feeling of the eclectic nature of the contents.

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## 12. *Adbusters* ideology

- 1) Answers based on students' own research.
- 2) Students will find many aspects of the website that show the subversive and activist adverts and Manifesto sections provide much evidence of both activism and subversion.

## 13. *Adbusters* and social contexts

- 1) Responses based on students' own research. There are some interesting adverts in the set edition that uses graffiti to make a point about the 'trap we've landed ourselves into' and the Americans need to 'cut their consumption by 85%'. There are many other examples in the set edition.
- 2) There are many ideas students can discuss here. Some students might look at the price of the magazine which contradicts the magazine's principles. However, the fact that the magazine makes 0% profit should be cited as supporting *Adbusters*' message.
- 3) When students complete their research they will find lots of evidence for the Occupy movement. However, some people challenged this success, at least initially. There are some interesting articles which assess the wider impact of the Occupy movement.

## 14. 'Culture jamming': subversion and *Adbusters*

- 1) Many of the adverts in the set edition are good examples of culture jamming (beyond the set edition students could explore other adverts that link and connect with the set adverts). Students could discuss this to the rest of the group.
- 2) A quick Google image search of culture jamming reveals hundreds of subvertisements. Students can collect and present their findings.
- 3) The link <https://www.adbusters.org/spoof-ads> reveals a number of examples that students could use for their presentation/seminar. Some, like the neoclassical economics advert, might need more context but are easily accessible to students.

## 15. *Adbusters*: niche audiences and specialised content

- 1) Students might discuss a number of aspects of the language, including the use of the imperative to create a sense of community. The use of hashtags could also be considered as reader participation in issues beyond the magazine, both by looking on social media and by participating themselves. Students might also point out the use of imperatives in some of the articles to make the reader feel part of a wider movement.
- 2) There are so many examples that students could choose from, but a quick exploration of X (Twitter) using #KillaCorp #GeneralStrike #Occupy.
- 3) Answers based on students' own research.

## 16. *Adbusters* and audience response: accepting the ideology?

- 1) The preferred reading of this advert is to accept the message that brands such as Louisa are part of consumerism and the capitalist society. In contrast, the poverty represented in the advert is a negative reader in this reading as they see the inequality between societies.
- 2) Students will bring their own ideas from their research. They might find some of the language in the articles difficult; some might find some of the language challenging. There are many examples in the set edition).
- 3) Students will have a variety of responses to the set edition.

## 17. The discerning reader: *Adbusters* and cultural capital

- 1) The nature of *Adbusters* is definitely not for everyone so this would never have success with a general audience. The editorial team know their potential audience and everything is tailored to that audience. Knowing your audience and having a clear approach is important to the success of a magazine.
- 2) Responses based on students' own analysis.
- 3) See answer 1. The content of this magazine is so specialised and everything about it is targeted to a specific audience. It is definitely part of its USP. A mainstream audience would not be interested in the content and it would never be considered a mainstream magazine.

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## Show What You Know

### 1. How useful is a semiotic approach to studying magazines? Refer to *Woman* and *Adbusters*.

- Here we are focused on Barthes. Think: denotation/connotation; naturalisation; five
- It's a tricky question in terms of the evaluation element. We don't often consider crit a tool to 'read' messages and values in media texts.

Usefulness for *Woman* might include:

- How the consideration of connotations can help us construct attitudes to femininity a period. Think about the adverts, the article on 'A-Level beauty' and the Hitchcock int messages and values of the text producer.
- The way we can interpret the ideology of the magazine through the front cover, think readership and the representations of gender inherent within.

However, there is also an evaluative element to this question. Semiotics focuses on the te limitations of this approach by focusing on:

- The lack of consideration of historical context when considering the set product. We representations of gender and societal norms when the text was produced to really g
- The reasons for text production, specifically the pleasure an audience gains from read gratifications here). It is too easy to be critical of the messages and values if we don't the popularity of the magazine at the time.

Usefulness for *Adbusters* might include:

- An obvious advantage can be gained from exploring the idea of culture jamming and technique to present messages and values about anti-consumerism and environment

However, it is also important to consider the following, if we are to have a full understandi

- The social and cultural context in which the magazine is produced. Without understa fighting against, it is impossible to fully understand the messages presented.
- The production context of the magazine: if we consider the independent nature of the movement than simply a magazine production company, we can then fully appreciate

### 2. 'Magazines are significantly influenced by the contexts in which they are produced.' How and *Adbusters*?

Here, you can consider different contexts and how they have influenced the products. The and political.

Ideas for *Woman*:

- A consideration of how the social and historical context affects the representations, es of traditional stereotypes of men and women with more progressive representations w of the second wave of feminism. The 'Extra Special on Men' is an interesting article to creme puff and the WRAC. All of these will allow you to consider the contrast between representations (potentially bringing in van Zoonen and Lévi-Strauss).
- In terms of economic context, it is important to think about the idea of magazine con particular the horizontal integration which led to a near monopoly in terms of womer impact of this (bringing in Curran and Seaton) and how this might potentially stifle cr

Ideas for *Adbusters*:

- Here, a consideration of the social and historical contexts which gave rise to the Adb Looking at the rise of consumerism and then the reaction to this along with fears abo forefront of the magazine and there are lots of examples you can use to illustrate the of the subvertisements and the article 'Save the Planet, Kill Yourself'.
- Economic contexts are interesting here: looking at the independent nature of the ma profit would provide a clear contrast with *Woman*. Looking at the dichotomy between magazine and its high price tag / selling of merchandise would also be interesting to
- It might also be interesting to discuss the overtly political nature of *Adbusters* with it systems and parties, especially in America. This would provide an interesting contras focus in *Woman* and what this says about the different readerships.

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3. **Evaluate the idea that the magazine industry, like other media industries, is driven by the profit motive. Refer to *Woman* and *Adbusters* in your response.**

Here you might start by using some of the points about economic contexts from the previous question. Compare the conglomerate ownership of *Woman* versus the independent ownership of *Adbusters*.

Ideas for *Woman*:

- A focus on IPC and the development of this magazine conglomerate, including the role of horizontal integration, is essential here.
- It is interesting to look at the content of *Woman* and how it reinforces the idea of attitude as a commodity. The magazine therefore focuses on creating profit. You might look at the kinds of articles in the set to see how they focus on beauty as a topic that would interest the target audience.
- In terms of evaluation, it might be interesting to look at some of the adverts, such as those for perfume, which are necessarily focused on profit but are promoting a more independent view of women.

Ideas for *Adbusters*:

- The Adbusters Media Foundation and its fiercely not-for-profit stance is important to consider in relation to Seaton's theory. Looking at the mission statement of the foundation and interviewing its members would give a clear idea of its political motives.
- You might look at the way the changing nature of magazine production, with its ability to support smaller, more niche producers to have a voice in what has been a very mainstream world.
- Building on this idea of a niche audience, it would be interesting to explore the content of the magazine and how it appeals to a very specific, activist readership.

4. **Explore how *Adbusters* magazine targets and attracts a specialised audience.**

It is important to establish what the target audience of *Adbusters* is: focus on the anti-capitalist and anti-consumerist aspects.

Ideas for development:

- Start with the front cover and how it subverts the conventions of typical 'glossy' magazines. The contents will also subvert mainstream expectations.
- *Adbusters*' rejection of typical magazine conventions throughout creates much more of a polysemic or lacking in anchorage. There is an assumption that its reader will have a different perspective on the mainstream audience.
- The use of culture jamming would appeal to a particular kind of activist reader who is interested in challenging the norms and capitalism which pervade the mainstream media. Looking at spoof adverts such as those for Louboutin spoofs would be useful in terms of reinforcing the messages and values of the magazine.
- The use of direct address throughout (often in a challenging way as seen in the 'Save the World' campaign) and the invitation to contribute to the magazine (in readers' letters and even artwork, etc.) would help to build a bigger community.
- The life of the foundation beyond the physical magazine to reinforce this idea of a community through the use of the website and social media.
- The fact that *Adbusters* is more of a movement than a magazine, with its direct action and activism, appeals to readers who want to feel part of the anti-consumerist movement.
- Using links to Jenkins and Shirky in these last two bullet points would help to reinforce the idea of prosumers.

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5. Discuss the representations of gender in the set edition of *Woman* magazine.

It is important to remember that this question focuses on gender, and so considering representation is important.

Ideas for development:

- The social and historical context of the magazine and how this affects the representations to consider. Remembering that the magazine was produced right at the beginning of the 20th century can then consider the mixed representations of men and women that are seen in the magazine.
- Generally the representations are conventional and stereotypical, and focusing on aspects of beauty would help here. Also considering the idea of beauty standards and the need for women to attract men is important in this question.
- The Hitchcock article is a good transition between the representations of women and attitudes towards women, especially the British housewives who are the target audience.
- Then move on to the representations of men who, for the most part, have more dominant roles (the creme puff advert works well here).
- However, given the historical context, there are representations which are more progressive. The 'Extra Special on Men' present a more independent view of women and a slightly patriarchal one. Even here, though, there is a sense that men are the centre of a woman's world: even in the more 'modern' view of women, there is still a sense of the traditional roles being established.
- Lots of theories are relevant here: Hall's view of the media creating stereotypes would be relevant to beauty standards and light-skinned women; van Zoonen's view of representations of men and women would be relevant to the overall gender representation.

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