

Guidelines on individual units

These guidelines are intended to offer Centres an approach to the teaching of the new Specification. They do not represent a definitive teaching strategy but rather some suggestions to help centres structure the teaching of the different units. For ease of use the guidelines have been written under unit headings but it is hoped that Centres may take a more integrated approach in their delivery.

MS1

MS1: Media Representations and Receptions

It is likely that the teaching of this subject will begin with the study of texts and from this develop into a study of the issues represented in texts and how audiences respond to texts and the representation issues they raise.

According to the Specification, for this unit, students will be expected to demonstrate:

- Their ability to examine a media text in detail, employing appropriate analytical tools and language
- An understanding that texts are constructed
- An understanding of how social/cultural groups, events and issues are represented in media texts.
- An understanding of how audiences respond to and interpret texts.

In order to do this, students will also be expected to have studied a range of different representations within texts, including:

- Gender (for example the different ways in which men and women are represented by the media)
- Ethnicity (for example through a study of the positive and negative representations of people from different ethnic backgrounds in news coverage and film texts)
- Age (for example the representations of teenagers/youth and older people)
- Issues (for example issues raised by magazine articles such as size zero)
- Events (for example the news coverage of events)
- Local, regional and national representations (definitions and comparisons)

The unit contains three key areas of emphasis: textual analysis, representation and audience. It is expected that the teaching of these areas will be combined through the study of selected texts. It is not intended that they should be “taught” separately.

1. TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Students will be required to analyse texts showing an understanding of why elements of the text are selected and how the text is constructed. It is essential that students are taught to

transfer skills across a range of different examples. In this way they will be able to analyse any text they are exposed to under examination conditions. Study of the following concepts are recommended.

GENRE

Generic conventions – repetition, typicality, themes and key signifiers

- Mise-en-Scene
- Settings and Locations
- Characteristic plots

In particular students should consider how conventions are used AND how they are challenged, adapted and combined.

NARRATIVE

- Construction
- Structure
- Key codes such as action and enigma
- The role of characters within the narrative

SIGNS AND CODES

Students will be expected to have an understanding of **TECHNICAL CODES** and how meanings are created through them. It is important that students can do more than name the code; they need to be able to discuss how and why it has been used. Where appropriate, students should be aware of the following technical codes **and their use:**

- Camera shots/angles
- Photographic techniques
- Framing
- Editing
- Lighting
- Special effects

Students should also be aware of **AUDIO CODES**, in particular the use of diegetic and non diegetic sound through:

- Dialogue
- Music
- Sound effects

In the study of print based texts students should also consider the following through the use of **VISUAL** and **WRITTEN** codes:

- Design / layout e.g. graphics, use of colour etc.
- Typography
- Language
- Persuasive techniques
- Register and mode of address

Note: although in the Specification we use terminology like codes, which emphasises a structuralist heritage, this is not the only approach Centres may wish to introduce their students to. The important factor is that students understand that texts go through a process

of selection and construction and that they can, generally, be interpreted differently by different audiences.

2. REPRESENTATIONS

Centres may wish to encourage their students to examine a range of positive and negative representations across media forms. In examining the nature of representations (how they have been selected, constructed, mediated and anchored) and exploring how they are interpreted and responded to by audiences, students may develop an understanding of ideologies, for example:

- Ways of seeing the world – ideologies as values, attitudes and beliefs
- How ideologies are conveyed through texts
- How ideologies have affected the production of the texts
- How dominant ideologies are reinforced and/or challenged by texts.

Key Questions:

What kind of world is being *constructed* by media texts?

Students might consider the following points:

- That the “reality” of the world presented by texts is constructed
- That audiences respond to texts according to their experience and knowledge of the world presented to them

How are *stereotypes* used as a shorthand to represent certain groups of people?

Students might consider the following point:

- That makers of media texts use audience recognition of types to transmit messages rapidly. Most media texts (e.g. films, magazine articles, television programmes and advertising) only have a short time to establish characters and as a result offer limited representations.

Who is in control of the text? Whose ideas and values are expressed through the representations?

Students might consider the following points:

- Texts are **constructed** and often **manipulated** by the producers (and organisations behind them). For example: newspaper articles, films, television programmes
- A process of mediation occurs in the construction of media texts, for example a news report.

How will audiences interpret the representation within texts? Who are the texts aimed at?

Students might consider the following points:

- That an understanding of representation is linked to the cultural experiences and the backgrounds of the audience.
- It is also affected by the audience relationship with, for example, the individual star/ event /environment etc.

What ideologies / messages might be contained within the representation/s?

Students might:

- Be aware of the view being presented through the text.

- Question whether the particular interests / views of the world are being challenged, reinforced or promoted.
- Consider whether the texts are promoting, challenging or judging the roles of gender / ethnicity/ age etc.

3. AUDIENCE RESPONSES

The focus for this question will be on the relationship between the text and the audience. The emphasis will be on the social and cultural experiences that affect audiences' responses to the text and it is therefore important that the initial focus is on the range of possible responses to texts and not audience theories – although the analysis of the response may lead to an exploration of **relevant** audience response theories.

Students might like to explore:

- **The different ways in which audiences can be described** e.g.
social / cultural background (demographics)
active and passive
interactive users
industry categories (such as those used by advertisers e.g. aspirers, achievers etc.)
- **How texts position audiences through the use of:**
Modes of address
Representation/s
Narrative/s
- **How different audiences respond to, use and interpret texts, through the use of relevant theories which underpin the following:**
Preferred ; Negotiated; Oppositional Readings
Active and Passive responses
Reception Analysis

What will students be required to do in the examination?

They will be given stimulus material taken from a range of examples as detailed in the specification.

For Question 1 students will focus on an analysis of the stimulus material.

For Questions 2 and 3 they will respond to questions on representation and audience. These questions will explicitly require students to incorporate references to the detailed examples in their responses. Students who rely solely on the stimulus material in their answers will obviously produce a limited response.

A SAMPLE TEACHING APPROACH BASED ON THE ANALYSIS OF THE REPRESENTATIONS OF MEN IN THE MEDIA

Clearly there are several different ways for Centres to approach the teaching of this unit. For example, it could be approached through a study of texts which clearly incorporates an exploration of representation; or it could be approached through a study of one of the specified representation areas (for example gender or ethnicity). The best approach in practice may be to combine these two approaches wherever possible.

This sample teaching approach will encourage students to consider how different media representations are encoded in media texts and interpreted differently by different audiences.

As a starting point students could consider stereotypes and 'categories' of male representation, for example:

- The action hero
- Macho man
- The liberal, sensitive 'new man'
- The 'lad'
- The professional
- The inept 'bungler'

Various adaptations of these categories are found in a range of media texts – and this is a good basis from which to start a discussion of stereotypes.

Possible areas to cover in detail may include:

Men in Magazines

- *Men's Health* – the 'ideal' man, male narcissism and notions of superiority, references to women in a 'seemingly' sensitive way, quick – fix problem solving (getting a six pack), concerns about body image etc., the 'new man' and his concerns. Interesting because it always has a man on the front cover.
- *GQ, FHM* – earlier examples of the magazines attempted to portray the 'new man' but less sensitive towards women, good humoured advice on relationships etc. *GQ* is aimed at the (supposedly) smartly dressed, sophisticated man but still lot of images of women
- *Nuts, Zoo* – ideas of laddishness, references to women, use of language and mode of address, reinforcement of stereotypes
- *Sugar 'Ladmag'* – girls' view of boys, how boys are represented to a younger audience in a girl's magazine

Audience issues:

How are men represented to the reader?

How are men represented to women readers?

How are women represented in the magazines?

What are the underlying values and attitudes contained within the magazine?

Additional resources

Send for press packs from the magazines – they contain lots of useful information about readership etc.

Look at the websites – *Men's Health* and *Nuts* give an interesting reader profile

'The Media Teacher's Book' by Julian McDougall has a good chapter on men's magazines
Media, Gender and Identity by David Gauntlett has a very relevant chapter on gender in magazines. There is also a related website with up to date information. This has two good interviews between David Gauntlett, Amy Jankowicz and Derrick Cameron on men in magazines. www.theory.org.uk

Laura Barton's Guardian article 'It's all gone tits up' also offers an interesting perspective!
The Guardian, Saturday January 17th, 2004

Men on Television

- Situation comedies featuring well-intentioned but inept men in terms of relationships and parenting e.g. Nicholas Lyndhurst in *After You've Gone*, Hugh Dennis in *Outnumbered*, Robert Lindsay in *My Family*
- News/documentary programmes. Men as experts, in power, opinion leaders. Featuring men defined by their professional status and their economic standing. Seen to be important and valuable by society.
- Television dramas e.g. crime – strong, silent types who are in charge, emotional, often in touch with their feminine side (e.g. CSI), attractive to women but who are also often flawed in some way e.g. drink problem, shady past etc.

Men in Advertising

- Fragrance ads – the 'beautiful man', notions of body image, attractive to both sexes. Explicit nature of some campaigns e.g. aspirational appeal for both genders. Lynx campaign is interesting in looking at man as the 'object' for the woman.
- DIY, Homemaker ads – 'it does what it says on the tin'. 'Basic' man. Often featuring inept, challenged representation of a man e.g. Flash who needs an easy solution to domestic problems.
- Car adverts – man in control of machine, ideas of power, often seen to be overcoming adverse environment e.g. fire, desert etc.
- Family man – cereal ads etc. still usually good looking.
- Consider adverts that play upon and also challenge conventional stereotypes
- **Audience issues:** How do the persuasive techniques used by advertisers work upon a range of audiences?
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Additional resources:

Websites for specific products – they often discuss strategies, aims and target audiences
Media and Meaning, an Introduction, Stewart et al; *The Media Students' Book*, Branston and Stafford. Good chapter on advertising and audience categories

Men in Film

- The 'action hero' – lots of examples here from superheroes to Bruce Willis and 'thinking women's' heroes like Harrison Ford and George Clooney. An interesting example is *DareDevil* - taken from a comic book character where the superhero is blind. Bond films are interesting to study – how has he and the women around him changed?
- Macho man – categorized through his belief in himself and his relationship with women. Can be a comedy character. *X-Men*, *The Matrix* – men dealing with powerful female counterparts. Russell Crowe in *Gladiator* – macho hero with emotional side.
- The romantic hero who battles through adversity to 'get the girl' e.g. Hugh Grant. Also notions here of what it is to be 'English'.
- The loser – men in 'mid life crisis' who inspire empathy but also achieve an element of success, usually in a relationship, within the narrative of the film. E.g. *Sideways*, *Lost in Translation*, *American Beauty*
- The 'bad guy' – villains and their roles

Audience issues:

How is the representation of the character constructed visually?

How is the audience positioned in terms of responding to the character – does this position change during the film?

How are audience responses manipulated during the film?

Different audience responses to aspects of the film e.g. violence

Additional Resources

Men In Film, BFI

Useful section in *Media, Gender and Identity*, David Gauntlett

General resources:

Representation – An Introduction, Roy Stafford, BFI

Media, Gender and Identity, David Gauntlett. Interesting section – ‘Ten things wrong with the media effects model’

Imelda Whelan, *Overloaded: Popular Culture and the Future of Feminism*

‘*The Media Teacher’s Book*’ by Julian McDougall

Understanding Representation ed. Wendy Helsby

Media and Meaning, an Introduction, Stewart et al

The Media Students’ Book. Branston and Stafford

Websites:

www.mediaknowall.com

www.allisonmedia.net

www.theory.org.uk

www.aber.ac.uk/media

www.media.guardian.co.uk

MS2

MS2 – Production Processes

The guidelines should be read in conjunction with the AS/AL Media Studies specification.

This unit is centre assessed and externally moderated and provides students with the opportunity to plan for, and produce, media productions.

Students are required to demonstrate:

- their ability to research and plan for a media production
- their ability to produce a technically competent media production
- their ability to evaluate their own production work

This will be done through the submission of three **linked** pieces of work. These will comprise;

- a **pre-production** reflecting research and demonstrating planning techniques
- a **production** which has developed out of the pre-production
- a **report** of between 1200 – 1600 words

Centres should consider carefully what tasks are appropriate for their students and should take into consideration the technical equipment available to them. Briefs can be set on a whole class basis, possibly with choice of two or three tasks. The skills needed to complete these tasks will need to be taught to the students and it is envisaged that small scale planning tasks will be incorporated into the teaching of MS1 as preparation for this unit. For example, as part of the teaching at MS1 on, say, analysing film sequences and film posters planning activities such as storyboarding or poster designing could be incorporated.

(A sample brief is given at the end of this section)

Prior to beginning their pre-production work, students will need to undertake individual and independent research.

This research may comprise any of the following as appropriate:

Textual and/or content analysis into comparable products

Questionnaires and surveys

Focus groups and interviews

Accessing secondary research data such as books, magazine articles and internet sites

Research into relevant institutional contexts

Research into intended/possible audiences

Production

Prior to undertaking the production students will need to be taught how to use the equipment available to them. Teachers may then support students during their coursework activities by offering guidance and advice.

Students producing an audio or audio-visual production (approximately 3 minutes) may choose to work either individually or in a group of **no more** than four. The size of the group must be commensurate with the task set. Students working in groups need to have clearly

defined and comparable roles or be responsible for individual segments of a production. For example in the production of a trailer or television opening sequence, an individual student may be responsible for the area of filming or sound or editing. Alternatively, in a longer production like a radio programme, a student may be responsible for a complete section of the finished product.

Students producing a digital media production such as web pages or print based productions (which should be 2 – 3 pages in length) **must** work individually. Please note: the majority of the images in a print production **must** be taken by the student.

Additional guidance for group productions:

- Students working in groups for their production will need to co-ordinate their pre-production tasks. Three students working on an opening sequence for a new television crime drama, for example, may have produced individual storyboards and then selected one for filming. Or, one may have produced a storyboard, one a script and one DTP draft of two posters advertising the programme. Clearly, although these tasks are individual, the students will need to have collaborated on them.
- Students working on an animated production, may, in consultation with the Principal Moderator, be given permission to submit a production below the required time limit.
- Students producing advertisements may need to produce two, depending on their length.
- Performing does not, for this specification, constitute a media role.

Please note: In certain circumstances it is possible to combine a group production with individual tasks. For example, where students wish to film a single advertisement or a very short sequence, this can be supplemented with an individually produced print advertisement. Please contact the Principal Moderator for further advice.

Students must also submit an **individually** produced **evaluative report** of between 1200 and 1600 words. This report will:

- **Briefly outline the task**
- **Briefly discuss the research undertaken to inform the pre-production**
- **Discuss the intended target audience and explain how they have been targeted.**
- **Briefly evaluate any feedback received from the intended audience.**

- **Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the production through, for example, a comparison of their production with existing media products.**
- **Candidates who have worked in a group will need to evaluate their own contribution, perhaps by comparing their own role to a similar role within a comparable media product. For example a student who has been responsible for editing may compare their own editing with that in a previously researched text.**

Note:

Students may need guidance on how to analyse their own work within an evaluative framework. Such tasks as deconstructing their production through text marking, responding to specific (teacher directed) questions (orally and in writing) and setting up focus groups amongst a sample of the target audience, may form part of the evaluative process and offer students a wealth of information to draw upon in their final report; to add to their comparative analysis.

Students may submit their work in the form of an illustrated report, a discursive essay or a suitably edited blog.

The form MS2/1 must to be completed and authenticated by the students and by teachers. Detailed comments on the forms from teachers is extremely useful and aids the moderation process.

GUIDANCE FOR TEACHING MS2

- MS2 is a taught module and it would be good practice to teach elements of MS1 and MS2 together throughout the first year of the course. Looking closely at texts will develop a deeper understanding of production processes and audiences and will help students in their research, planning and productions. Similarly, the experience of analysing a range of representations will help them in the construction of their own representations.
- Tasks can be set on a whole class basis and therefore the teacher can prepare the students by teaching necessary technical skills and introducing the set topic to them through class discussion and activities.
- A pre-production demonstrates research and planning and results in a final draft which, while not a finished product, clearly targets a specific audience and adheres to (or consciously breaks) accepted codes and conventions.
- Students should be encouraged to consider the strengths, weaknesses and viability of their pre-productions before going on to make their productions. A production should be a fully realised media product that could exist in the marketplace for a specific audience.

MS2 – A SAMPLE BRIEF:

1. AN INDIVIDUAL PRE-PRODUCTION

Following on from our class-work and your group discussions into the HORROR GENRE:

Your task is to produce either:

1. A storyboard for the trailer of a new horror film;

Or

2. To use your ideas for a new horror film to produce sketches for a sequence for a new horror comic/graphic novel story.

2. A PRODUCTION ASSIGNMENT

Your task is to produce either:

1. The trailer for ONE OF YOUR GROUP'S storyboards. You may work on this together but please plan and discuss your individual roles with me before you begin.

OR

2. The dvd cover and a poster for your new horror film. THIS TASK MUST BE DONE INDIVIDUALLY

3. A REPORT:

This must be done individually. It should be between 1,200 – 1,600 words and should focus on:

- a. The research you did to inform your pre-production
- b. A justification of the target audience for your production
- c. An evaluation of the production, highlighting strengths and weaknesses.

MS3

MS3: MEDIA INVESTIGATION AND PRODUCTION

The MS3 unit contributes to synoptic assessment, and as such it represents A2 standards of attainment. It is expected that students will build upon the knowledge, understanding and skills already gained at AS level. Students will demonstrate an integrated understanding of texts, audiences and institution through a written investigation leading to a production outcome. This unit is centre assessed and externally moderated.

Students are required to demonstrate:

- Individual and independent research skills
- The ability to use their research to inform a media product
- Technical and creative skills
- The ability to evaluate the product exploring the validity of the research undertaken

Students will submit three pieces of linked work comprising;

- A research investigation focused on one or more of the following concepts: **genre, narrative, representation**. (1400 – 1800 words)
- A production which arises out of the research
- An evaluation which explains how the research has informed the production (500 – 750 words)

The Research Investigation:

This piece of work will be done **individually**. Students will formulate their own research field of study that is focused on one or more of the concepts of **genre, narrative or representation**. The teacher should have an instrumental role in negotiating the title for their assignments, reminding students that there must be clear potential for the **development of the investigation into a production piece**.

The Production:

Digital media such as web sites and print based productions must be undertaken **individually**; audio and audio-visual productions may be undertaken either individually or in small groups of no more than 4 students. Students working in groups must all have a clearly defined production role which allows them to demonstrate a significant and definable contribution to the production.

The production should reflect what the student has learnt through their research and should demonstrate creative and technical skills..

- Digital media productions should be 3 – 4 pages in length, with the majority of the images being generated by the student.
- Audio and audio-visual productions should be 3 – 4 minutes in length. (Shorter ones, in the case of animation may be agreed in consultation with the Principal Moderator.
- In the case of campaigns, students may combine audio-visual and print. Print-based material **must** be produced individually. The **audio-visual product only** may be produced individually or by a small group.

Please note: Students must present their productions in a different media form to that used at MS2

The Evaluation:

The main purpose of the evaluation is to explore how the research undertaken informed the production.

GUIDANCE ON GROUP WORK

- Group members must collaborate early on in this unit in order to agree discrete areas for investigation that will offer each student relevant and separate contributions to the construction of a common product.
- The investigation **MUST** be undertaken individually, so students who wish to produce audio or audio-visual productions in a small group must ensure that their contribution to the production reflects their research. For example if a group decides to base their production work on the construction of the opening sequence for a new horror film, one student may research and write about the representation of women in horror films; another may research the narrative structure of the openings of horror films and a third the genre conventions apparent within horror films. It is therefore **essential** that students working in groups decide upon their production and individual research investigations from the outset.
- A definable contribution is one which enables each individual candidate to account for their own part in the production task. If in doubt, please contact the Principal Moderator.

Guidance on Teaching MS3

- Teaching MS3 and MS4 through an integrated approach in the second year of the course may help to develop a deeper understanding of industry and related issues which will then help students to formulate their research projects and related productions.
- As an introduction to the unit, teachers may wish to revisit the key area of genre, narrative and representation and link them to the study of media industries.
- Teachers may want to give students guidance on a range of different research methods for example, qualitative and quantitative research skills

- Students will need to be given opportunities to develop their writing skills. In their investigations, students should aim to set a clear research agenda, explore key texts, apply research undertaken, consider audience issues, contexts/changes, address relevant issues, trends and debates and draw intelligent and independent/original conclusions.
- Students will need time to formulate their titles in consultation with teachers. If they wish to work in groups for their production, they will need to collaborate at this stage in order to ensure they are choosing separate areas for research that are all relevant to their intended production.
- Although specific marks are not awarded for the planning process, at A2 the best productions will obviously arise out of thorough planning.
- Students may need advice on selecting the most appropriate format for their evaluation.

GUIDANCE ON POSSIBLE INVESTIGATIONS

The examples below have been grouped into complimentary tasks. In the first section there are tasks suitable for individual students. An example of a possible area for investigation is given first and then there is a suggestion for a possible production which could develop out of the investigation. In the second section there are suggestions for individual research investigations which may lead to a group production.

SECTION 1: INDIVIDUAL INVESTIGATIONS AND PRODUCTIONS

- An exploration of the representation of teenagers in (two or three) British films.
- Campaign material for a low budget UK 'teenage-rights-of-passage' film
- An analysis of the representation of two stars from mainstream and alternative music.
- The official fan site for a new artist (this could utilise MySpace or YouTube)
- An analysis of news photographs: their structure and narrative appeal
- A series of anchored news photographs for a specific newspaper
- Do film promotional websites follow the same conventions? A close analysis of (two or three) contrasting sites
- A web site promoting a new film (this could become a group production with the insertion of film footage shot by the students)
- How far are Soap Operas a representation of real life? (A close analysis of two contrasting programmes) '
 - Three to four page magazine spread launching a gritty new soap opera.
- Exploring the representation of gender in men's magazines.
- Three magazine pages for a new men's magazines which challenges stereotypical representations.
- Analysing representations in teen magazines
- A photo story for a new teen magazine
- How do cause adverts represent issues?
- Three print cause adverts aimed at teenagers (e.g. anti drugs)

SECTION 2: GROUP INVESTIGATIONS AND PRODUCTIONS

Research Titles:

- An investigation into how genre conventions are used to raise audience expectations in film trailers.
- An analysis of the narrative structure of three contrasting trailers.
- A study of the representation of heroes and villains in three trailers

Production:

- A trailer for a new film.

Research Titles:

- An analytical comparison between two narrative driven music videos
- A study of gender representations in two (or three) music videos
- How are music videos edited? A close study of two (or three) music videos

Production:

- A music video for a new band

Research Titles:

- Investigating the styles of two radio presenters.
- Deconstructing reality: how are issues represented in radio programmes?
- A comparison between two radio news bulletins from contrasting channels

Production:

- The opening section of a new talk based radio programme

Research Titles:

- An examination of the genre conventions in documentaries (two or three) aimed at teenagers.
- How are teenagers represented in documentaries?
- Exploring the narrative structure and editing techniques in two short Channel 4 documentaries.
- Three minute wonder documentary exploring a local issue.

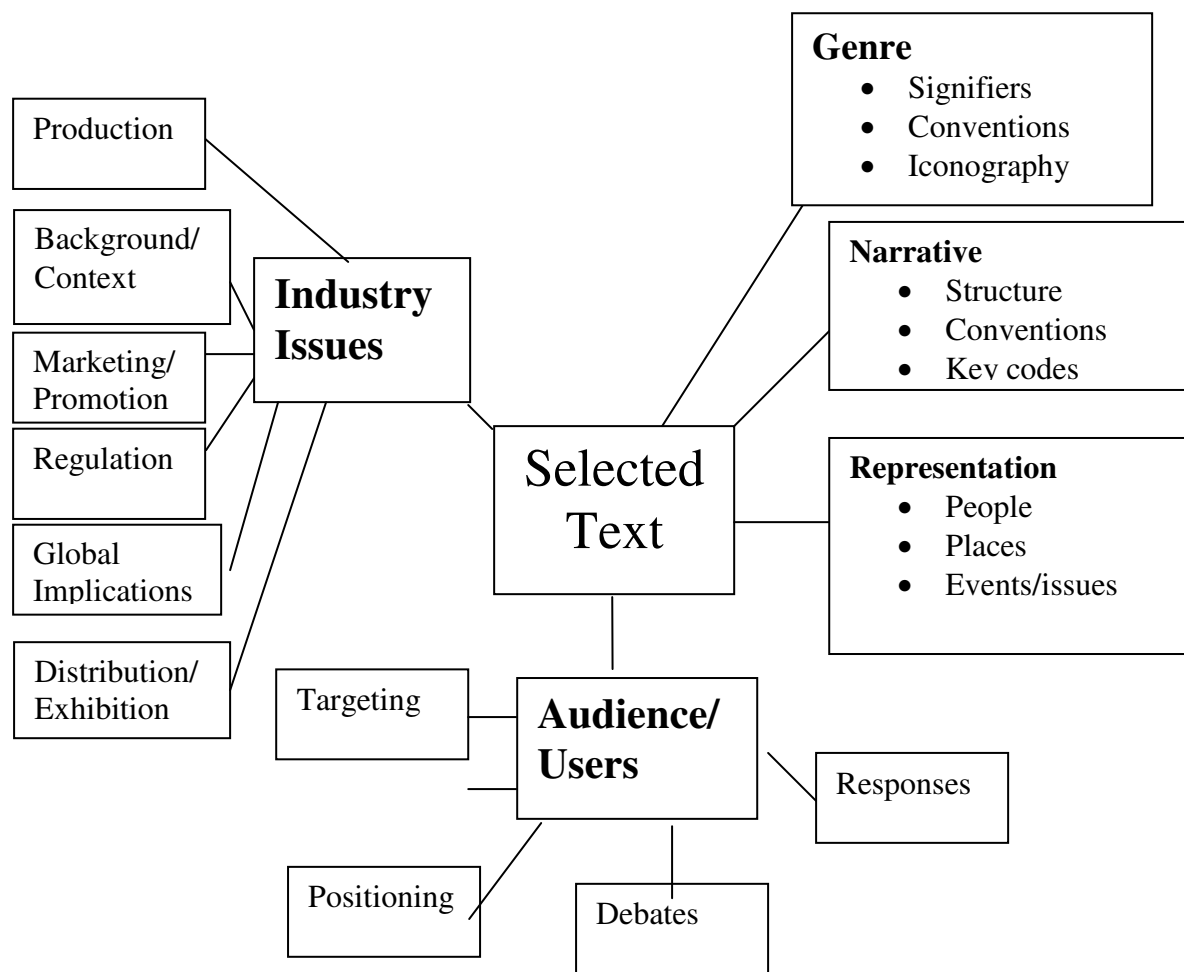
MS4

MS4: MEDIA – TEXT, INDUSTRY AND AUDIENCE

This unit focuses on developing both the knowledge students have gained in other areas of the course and their understanding of the links between texts, the industries that have produced them and the different audiences that respond to them.

Key Features

- Centres select three industries to study.
- Centres then select three **main** texts from each industry to focus on.
- For each text selected, students will need to consider the following and the links between them, as relevant to the texts selected.



Whilst Centres are free to select the texts they consider to be the most suitable for their students to study, contrasting texts are likely to offer students a wider experience and to prepare them more thoroughly for the end of unit exam. Centre selection also needs to take into consideration the fact that:

- Two of the three selected texts per industry must be contemporary (made within the previous five years)
- One text per industry must be British

Examples of possible texts:

This is neither a prescriptive nor exhaustive list but offers centres some contrasting suggestions.

Television

CSI/ Shameless/Tonight with Trevor Macdonald
America's Next Top Model/ Holby City/ Torchwood

Radio

Local Radio Breakfast Show/ The Archers /Zane Lowe Radio 1
Terry Wogan Show /Local Radio News/Classic FM afternoon show

Film

Love and Hate/ Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix / Sweet Sixteen
Casino Royale /Bullet Boy / Hot Fuzz

Music

Snow Patrol / Lily Allen/Snoop Dog
50 Cent /Girls Aloud / The Arctic Monkeys

Newspapers

The Guardian / The Sun / Metro
Local Evening paper /The Mail on Sunday / The Independent

Magazines

Cosmopolitan / The Big Issue / PS2 Magazine
Glamour / Loaded/ The Dandy

Advertising

Nike /Barnardos /Walkers
Coca Cola / Think! Campaign / Dove

Computer Games

Tomb Raider : Anniversary Edition/The Sims / Fifa (Football)
Super Mario Karts / Buffy the Vampire Slayer / Conflict: Denied Ops

NOTE:

Whilst the focus of study will be on the **three** key texts selected per industry, it is essential that students are exposed to a range of extracts from other texts in order to compare, contrast, discuss and analyse the main features of their key texts.

What will students be required to do in the examination?

Students will be required to answer **three** questions: **one** question (from a choice of two) from Section A and **two** questions (from a choice of four) from Section B. They will be required to select a different industry for each answer and to make reference in their answer to their three key texts.

Section A will be based on the texts themselves and questions will be based on the areas of genre, narrative and representation.

Section B will be based on industry and audience.

SAMPLE TEACHING APPROACHES BASED ON EXAMPLES FROM SELECTED INDUSTRIES;

The following 3 examples offer suggested teaching content based on the areas of text, industry and audience. They are not definitive but attempt to explore the ways these areas could be approached through a close study of the selected texts. The first two, on a computer game and a film offer comprehensive suggestions for approaching the teaching of these texts. The approach is easily transferable to other texts. The third, based on a magazine, offers a skeleton approach, which again, can be easily adapted or expanded.

COMPUTER GAMES:

Tomb Raider: Anniversary

Genre

- Third person shooter game. (TPS or 3PS)
- Onscreen character seen at a distance from a number of different possible angles as opposed to first person model in which the player views everything in the game world as if through his/her own eyes.
- Lara is always visible and the camera follows the action from behind or over her shoulder.
- Harkens back to classical form of platform game play.

Details of a range of game genres can be found in *Media and Meaning: An Introduction* (Colin Stewart, Marc Lavelle and Adam Kowaltzke. BFI publishing, 2001)

Narrative

What structure and space does the game inhabit? What kind of environment does it have? Not necessarily a linear story in all games.

- Quest or adventure structure.
- The three act structure. Proceeds from an orientation stage through various complications and blockages to a simple resolution.
- Faithfully preserves element of original Tomb Raider game. Brings the original adventure up to date. Lara Croft goes in search of three mysterious Scion artefacts. See www.tombraider.com/anniversary for comparison of original Tomb Raider and Tomb Raider anniversary. Consider the impact of technology on narratives.
- Narrative is interrupted by series of puzzles or games to be solved.

Discussion of Narrative Structures in Games to be found in *Everything Bad is Good for You. How Popular Culture is Making Us Smarter.* Steven Johnson (Penguin, 2005) and in work by Steven Levy. www.stevenlevy.com

Representation

- Lara Croft – originally Laura Cruz name changed for US audience. Female archaeologist and action hero.
- Issues of Gender representation. [Mulvey and the male gaze.]
- Lara's changing appearance. [See photo gallery on www.tombraider.co.uk/anniversary]
- Issues of realism
- The Role of the 'Hero'
- Representation of Place. Use of exotic locations and acceptability of "tomb-raiding" Postcolonial perspectives.

Industry

Production

- Published by Eidos Games(named as Britain's most successful company 1999) Based in Wimbledon, South London, Eidos Interactive Ltd, part of SCi Entertainment Group Plc www.eidos.co.uk
- Developed by Crystal Dynamics.
- Release date June 2007

- Platform - Play Station2 and PC. PSP version will follow soon as well as a release date (tba) for the Nintendo Wii.

Detailed information to be found at www.tombraider.com/anniversary

Background and Context

- Original Tomb Raider released 1996.
- Designed by Tony Gadd.
- The groundbreaking 3D game design ensured financial success and cult status.
- Sold over 7 million copies of the original game and 16 million copies worldwide of the first three games.
- Tomb Raider II, III, IV, Chronicles, The Angel of Darkness and Legend all followed. www.tombraider.com. Tomb Raider-Anniversary celebrates Lara's 10th Birthday.
- Heralded as classic and one of the best action adventure games ever.
- Boosted Play Station brand with initial exclusivity deal. Subsequently now available on many platforms including PC, Mac, Dreamcast and Game Boy Advance. The Seventh game in the series (Tomb Raider: Legend also released on PSP, X-Box, X-Box 360 and Nintendo DS)

Marketing

- Magazine Adverts /TV Adverts/Promotional Game Demos/ Trailers/Bus and Billboard campaigns.
- Cross channel and On-line campaign strategies.
- Linked to film releases where relevant. Eidos Interactive hopes for Tomb Raider 9 to combine film and game.
- Website for Tomb Raider and specifically Anniversary edition.
- Lara Croft's My Space account.
- Electronic newsletter.
- Tomb Raider: Anniversary front cover of Play Station Magazine (May 2007) Review of game and special feature in the series.
- Photo-shoot with all 'Lara' models including Nell McAndrew and new Lara Karima Adebibe (June 2007)
- Range of merchandise.
- In the past Sony have targeted youth market with Play Station room at London super club Ministry of Sound. Using cutting edge DJs and the mass appeal of dance music.
- Distributing fliers at Glastonbury and other festivals.
- Focus on youth orientated stations such as MTV.
- Advertising deals with Lucozade and Nike
- Profile and appearance allowed for much so called 'free marketing' with many newspapers and magazines keen to examine the phenomena that was, Lara Croft.
- The cover of the *The Face* magazine and the Douglas Copeland book *Lara's Book* are just two examples.
- Tomb Raider II, III, IV all produced in 10 months in order to release for pre-Christmas market.
- Films to accompany games. Tomb raider 1 and 2. Announced that TR3 will be made. All starring Angelina Jolie.

Global Implications

- Worldwide Phenomena
- Over 28 million copies of Tomb Raider series sold worldwide.
- Number one selling franchise in Europe and the US.

Distribution and Exhibition

- European and US Distribution.
- Internet sales as well as major retailers.
- Game Tap and Steam providing digital download distribution for the first time.

Audience

Who are the audience for video games and has this changed?

Information concerning changing video game audiences can be found in:

Trigger Happy: Videogames and the Entertainment Revolution Steven Poole (Arcade Publishing, 2000)

There are also key chapters in:

Media and Meaning: An Introduction

What Video Games Have To Teach Us About Literacy And Learning. James Paul Gee (Macmillan, 2003)

Teaching Videogames Barney Oram and James Newman (BFI Education)

Target audience

- Are games gender biased? Provides positive female role model? Introduces gaming to female audience? Sexualized appeal sells to men? Yet, it is important to note that much of the success of “Tomb Raider” is due to its astonishing 3-D graphics, audio, challenging strategy and innovative game play.

Audience Positioning

- Does the user identify with the character of Lara Croft?
- What is the preferred reading?

Debates

- Feminist Icon or Cyber Bimbo?
- Issues around violence
- Negative responses to the increased use of videogames.
- Moral Compass – within the universe of the game.
- Effects debate and video gaming.

Responses

- Audience response to increasingly gratuitous artwork and commercialisation was negative and Lara Croft has undergone many changes due to fan pressure. They were unhappy with the ‘less clothing and bigger breasts’ character.
- Fan sites/ Fan fiction / Chat Rooms/Web Forums.
- Uses and Gratifications – How can different audiences have different experiences of the same game?

FILM:

Sweet Sixteen – Ken Loach

Genre

- British
- Contemporary Social Realism
- Coming of Age Text
- Underclass film

Characteristics of Youth culture and Underclass films

- Emphasis on masculine world of dissent (e.g. drug taking, criminality reflects a rejection of mainstream society and values)
- Despite the celebration of dissent, the entrepreneurial spirit (from drug dealing and criminality)

Compare with *Trainspotting* (Danny Boyle 1996) *Twin Town* (Kevin Allen 1997) and *Lock Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* (Guy Ritchie 1998)

Narrative

- What kind of narrative structure does Loach employ?
- How does social realist cinema adhere to conventional narrative structures?
- Changes within social realism itself. Shift from class politics to politics of identity (race, gender, sexuality)
- Fewer images of community or collective action.
- A move away from traditional working class culture (employment in industry, geographical location)
- Compare with sophisticated use of voice over, music and editing techniques employed by Danny Boyle.

Representation

- Representation of the central character Liam.
- How does he fit the model of the social realist protagonist? (A historical and contextual approach may be useful here. Consider Arthur Seaton in *Saturday Night Sunday Morning*, Frank Machin in *This Sporting Life* or Billy Casper in *Kes*.)
- Liam typical 'scally' Burberry baseball cap.
- Selling 'knock off' fags. Post-Thatcherite entrepreneurial spirit.
- Liam wants to provide a better life for his mother when she comes out of prison.
- Has to battle with violent step-father.
- Becomes involved in selling drugs.
- Ironic title as life anything but *Sweet*.
- Consider nature of stereotypes within the film? To what extent are these realistic or merely expected and one-dimensional?
- Representation of gender. Masculinity in crisis?
- Representation of contemporary Britain. Post-industrial decline. (This can be compared to films such as *The Full Monty* or *Brassed Off*) Shot on location in Scotland. Attempts to reflect 'realism' of the council estate and run down industrial sites. Juxtaposes with panoramic beauty of heritage and tourist Scotland.
- Representation of Youth. (Consider against texts such as *Human Traffic* or *Kidhulthood*).
- Representation of class (underclass)

Further discussion of issues of representation and social realism in *Teaching Contemporary British Cinema*, (Sarah Casey Benyahia. BFI Education.2005)

Industry

Production

- Made on a relatively cheap budget the film was more of a critical success rather than a commercial one.
- *Sweet Sixteen* is a co-production with Road Movies in Germany and Tornasol and Alta in Spain, Scottish Screen has invested in it and the BBC has the British TV and Theatrical rights.
- The film has been pre-sold to Diaphana in France; BIM in Italy; Cinéart in Belgium and Holland; and the Glasgow Film Fund have given a grant for working in the region. Filmstiftung Nordrhein-Westfalen also gave funding.
- Issues regarding The UK Film Council and funding could be considered here as well as what makes a film British.

Background and Context

- Ken Loach - Famous for social realist films. Other notable films include *Kes*, *Raining Stones* and *My Name is Joe*. Produces critically acclaimed films. *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* won at Cannes last year.
- Paul Laverty also works extensively within this modern social realist framework.

Distribution and Marketing

- UK release date October 2002
- Released in many independent cinemas around the world. Mostly international film festivals, including Cannes.
- Limited US release.
- Won critical acclaim and many independent film prizes including best British Independent Film.
- Distributed by A Film Distribution and Icon.
- Profits made were: \$26,667 (USA) ([18 May 2003](#)) (3 Screens)
£144,388 (UK) ([6 October 2002](#)) (66 Screens)
- Star Image - No big name stars. There were some character actors recognisable from other dramas. The younger actors were novices recruited from local schools. Importance of stars for the success of a film can be considered here as well as the nature of stardom. Liam, played by Martin Compston has subsequently gone on to star in *Monarch of the Glen* and stars alongside Bob Hoskins in the upcoming film, *Doomsday*

Audience

Target Audience

- Is the film too regional? Using local actors, improvising dialogue and allowing heavy use of dialect meant that the open sequences of the film had to be subtitled. Can the film appeal to a non-Scottish audience?
- Is there an audience for modern social realism? Consider audience viewing figures/cinema numbers etc? Who does this appeal to?

Audience Positioning

- How does the film allow us to side with and identify with Liam? What techniques does Loach use in order to ensure this? Can the text be read differently? (Consider notions of preferred readings and audience reception here)
- The camera is always in a fixed position, at eye level with a long lens. It's as if you are in the doorway watching. That is the psychology of Ken Loach's films - you feel this connection to the subject almost too closely. Sometimes if it is painful and emotional you may not want to be in the room. That is what it is like when you watch in the cinema. You are a witness, not passive, but you can't change events.

Audience reception

- The film sparked a censorship debate in the UK regarding the amount of bad language used. Controversy surrounded the multiple use of the F-word and the presence of even more graphic language resulted in an 18 certificate. (Compare with certification for one of Loach's previous films, *My Name is Joe*.)
- It was argued, however, that this would prevent the people who could most closely identify with the characters in the film from going to see it, and that such language was much more commonly used, and therefore less offensive, in the north of the UK, where the film was set.

- The London based censors, however, stuck to their guns, although the local authority who cover the area where the film was shot, Inverclyde, utilized their cinema licensing powers to overrule this, and awarded the film a 15-certificate for screenings in their area.
- Critically the film was well received and won a prize for Best Independent British Film. Financially the film was not as successful. (Consider what makes a successful film?)

Audience Debates

- Debates on the Today Program and Radio 4 ensured air-time, publicity and discussion.
- Ken Loach's comments about the policy of censorship also added to controversy. Loach accused the censors and the BBC (who were critical of the use of violence and bad language) of being in "**Ivory Towers**" and watching from the "**Middle class gallery**" This raises questions about the nature of censorship and violence. The role of the BBFC and other institutions can also be considered here. More information on classification and censorship can be found on the BBFC website, www.bbfc.co.uk and in *Teaching Film Censorship and Controversy* (Mark Readman, BFI Education, 2005)
- The film also caused some controversy as the actors were not legally able to attend the premiere of the film they had starred in. Loach urged his audiences to go and see the film regardless of legal constraints, declaring the BBFC was useless.
- Notions of violence and the effects debates could be considered here.

MAGAZINES:

Big Issue: Skeleton outline

TEXT

Genre

How is *Big Issue* different to other magazines? Compare and contrast with other magazines studied and its front cover and contents page with a range of other front covers and contents pages

Narrative

Analyse at least 3 editions to ascertain typical structure, special and regular features, with a particular focus on contents pages.

Representations

To what extent are representations of social issues, especially homelessness and poverty, realistic? How might this compare to representations in newspapers and other media forms?

Investigate positive representations of homeless people: students may wish to focus on the *Street Talk* feature, usually on the last page, or on *Streetlights* and *Mr Big Issue Man*, usually found on p.6.

INDUSTRY

Production

Who owns *The Big Issue*? Introduction: a rare example of a successful independent magazine.

Read the *about us* and *how we work* sections on the website.

Context

Research background and history: <http://www.bigissue.com/magazinesite/introduction.html>

Marketing

Discuss the magazine's house style with particular reference to the *Badger* feature on the contents page and the *editorial overview* on the website.

Read <http://www.bigissueonline.com/cgi-bin/foundation/info.html?domain=info&name=mission>

How are the advertisements carried in *Big Issue* different to those in other magazines you have studied? How does *Big Issue* advertise itself?

Find and print off the magazine's rate card and compare it to the rate card for another magazine you have studied. How can you explain these differences?

Regulation

Search the Press Complaints Commission website for any adjudications against *The Big Issue*. (there aren't any. Why?)

Global Implications

Research the *International Network of Street Papers*:

Distribution

How does *Big Issue* distribution differ from that of any other magazine? Students may wish to use the website or to chat to a vendor.

AUDIENCE

Target Audience

Who are they? Ways of classifying the *Big Issue* audience

Discuss demographic and psychometric profiles and apply audience theories, then look at the reader profile on the website. <http://www.bigissue.com/profile.html>

How does this magazine attract different groups within the target audience? (e.g. editorial content, *Big Scene* "what's on" feature, film, book, music and art reviews, featured subscriber, competitions, letter, crossword..)

Investigate the magazine's use of stars and celebrities with a particular focus on covers and the *This Is Me* feature usually found on p.20.

Positioning

What assumptions does this magazine make about its audience that set it apart from other magazines ?

Debates

Given stereotypes about the homeless, how do the students feel about *Big Issue* vendors? Look at the *Big Issue* code of conduct. <http://www.bigissue.com/magazinesite/conduct.pdf>

To what extent is *The Big Issue* a “pro-social” text? Discussion of the idea of positive effects.

Responses

Look at the ABC data on the magazine and at the blurb which is usually found on page 4 to establish how many copies it sells.

<http://abcpdfcerts.abc.org.uk/pdf/certificates/13993353.pdf>

Resources:

International Network of Street Papers:

<http://www.bigissue.com/intl.html> (links to the excellent *Big Issue* website.)

<http://www.bigissue.com/magazinesite/>

Vendors’ Code of Conduct:

<http://www.bigissue.com/magazinesite/conduct.pdf>

Audit Bureau of Circulations:

<http://www.abc.org.uk/cgi-bin/gen5?runprog=nav/abc&noc=y>

National Readership Survey:

http://www.nrs.co.uk/open_access/open_toplevel/GeneraMagazines/index.cfm

Press Complaints Commission Code of Practice:

http://www.pcc.org.uk/assets/111/Code_aug_06.pdf