Welcome to Media studies!

Please read the introduction to your tasks carefully before completing them, it is important that you demonstrate your ability to follow instructions and your ability to effectively research and write up your findings.

- The following tasks are designed to develop your knowledge and understanding of media studies; specifically engaging with some of the key concepts and the practical aspects of media production.
- Bring completed work to your first lesson. During the first week you will be expected to know and be able to discuss key terms. BE PREPARED!
- Complete all required tasks
- Take the time to complete the tasks properly and in detail, make every piece of work count.
- Present your findings neatly and kept in a ring binder file is the best option. ORGANISATION IS KEY!
- Reference where your information comes from and quote anything you have directly copied.
- Plagiarism is a crime!
- Use stills of adverts/films/TV shows within your work wherever you can to highlight your points.

TASK 1 - Research:

You will need to look up and make notes and revision resources on the following Media Language theories;

Semiotics (Roland Barthes) – 12 Semiology

- Summary
- Key terms
- Examples

Structuralism (Levi Strauss) - 90 structuralism

- Summary
- Key terms
- Examples

Representation theories (Stuart Hall)

- Summary
- Key terms
- Examples

If you fancy a challenge have a go at research these two Representation theories and creating different revision resources for each;

- Feminist theory (Liesbet Van Zoonen)
- Theories of Identity (David Gauntlet)

You can also use the curriculum fact sheets to help you do this.

Task 2 part 1 - Analysing the set text:

You will need to find some background information about the set text

Production Context

- When was it made?
- Who was it made by?
- What is the purpose of the advert?

Historical context

- What was happening at the time of the advert being made?

Cultural Context

- What are the similarities between this advert and other adverts of the time?

Task 2 part 2 - Analysing the set text:

Use the following facts sheets to help you understand how we analyse the media, you should again create revision notes to help you gain a better understanding

- 01 analysis – Media
- 02 Lang – Moving image
- 10 Ideology – ideas values

You will now need to apply what you have learnt here two the set text (Print advert)

- You should make sure that you have annotated your own copy of the print advert with your analysis.
- Try applying the theories you have looked at in terms of Media language or Representation

Analysing Media Texts

This Factsheet summarises basic analysis skills and provides a framework for practical analysis.

Questioning the Text

In Media Studies "text" refers to any media product such as a television programme, a film, photographs, web pages, advertisments etc.

The central skill for all students in AS and A2 Media Studies is that of **analysis**. Even the practical production modules require an analysis or evaluation of the product that has been created.

Analysis begins by identifying **what** is being used to present information to the audience. This is the first and most basic stage in analysing a media text. As much as possible, the appropriate media language terminology should be used to show an awareness of the professional practices involved in creating the media text: e.g. saying: '**a tilt is used**' is preferable to saying '**the camera moves**'. It is more accurate and precise as the term includes the way the camera moves as well as the fact that it does.

Similarly if the analysis includes a discussion of the way the story is being told, then the appropriate narrative terminology should be used to identify the specific parts of the structure that are being identified.

e.g. 'this character is the hero'

At this stage though, even with the use of terminology, this is only observation and this is a skill that is not rewarded as highly as analysis and evaluation. Because of this it is best to avoid over-description. The observations should be given simply to provide an indication of what has been seen in the text that is going to be analysed.

To convert observation into analysis/evaluation, the reasons for the media language choice that has been observed needs to be considered. All media language choices have been made for a reason – to begin to evaluate a media text it is important to consider **why** that choice has been made.

Activity Choosing the Leading Man

Read the plot summary below and consider the actors offered for the role in the film.

The director of a film needs to cast a male lead. The film will have a high budget and the director is well known and respected. The film will be action driven and have a very strong romantic sub-plot. It is a period piece (early 20th C) and one of the key aspects of the romance is that the teenage female lead is to be represented as independent and free-thinking, quite the opposite of what was expected of a female at that time. She is to be depicted as part of the aristocracy and she is to be married to an older, arrogant and wealthy male, something she has agreed to out of duty to her family, not love. The plot will follow her rebellious love affair with a sensitive, artistic, working-class young man.

Question: Why are these actors unlikely to be cast as the male romantic lead in the given scenario?

Colin Farrell?	*Jude Law?*	*Hugh Grant?*	*Arnold Schwarzenegger?*

What the Director said.....

None of the actors offered are quite right for this role. Colin Farrell may be seen as being too dark and dangerous – he has a 'bad boy' persona whilst Jude Law may be associated with being a ladies-man because of his role in **Alfie** (2004: Dir. C. Shyer) and perhaps because of tabloid stories of his private life too. These factors make the actor unsuitable for the character outlined for this film. Hugh Grant is too old and too posh. Arnold Schwarzenegger wouldn't work in this role for a number of reasons: his age, his physical presence, his star-identity etc.

Q. What actor would be suitable for the role as outlined?

The plot is (loosely) that of **Titanic** (1997: Dir. J. Cameron) and the role was given to Leonardo DiCaprio. DiCaprio was a very popular actor at the time, having recently starred in **Romeo and Juliet** (1996: Dir. B. Luhrman) and so was recognised and associated with romance. Casting DiCaprio as for the role of Jack enabled the director to meet the plot needs outlined and play on the audience's knowledge and assumptions about the actor.

Observation: Leonardo DiCaprio plays the romantic lead in Titanic

WHY?

- DiCaprio had a romantic star persona and being small and blond, was the physical opposite to the other male character in the love triangle. The plot needed Jack to be portrayed as gentle and sensitive.
- He acts as the romantic 'hero' in the **narrative** of the text and is in binary opposition in terms of social position, personality and looks to the 'villain' played by Billy Zane.
- **Audiences** would recognise him and bring their prior knowledge to the film. Their association would help frame their expectations of the film and add to their enjoyment. Some may choose to view the film simply because he's in it. The actor's star status would help with marketing the film and would also be seen as a factor which would help to maximise the film's profit-making potential for the producing **institution.**
- His persona helps to identify the **genre** of the film. Despite the action sequences, his presence is part of the understanding of the film as a romance rather than an action film.

He provides a **representation** of an idealised male who is not demonstrating traditional masculine qualities. The fact that he 'gets the girl' works in opposition to the idea that the tall, dark and macho male will be more sexually successful, challenging conventional **ideologies** of gender roles.

Each of these actors bring different meanings to the roles they play in the way they look, their acting styles and the audience's prior knowledge and expectations they will have of them. If they were to play romantic leads, the roles would inevitably be different to the one created by DiCaprio in **Titanic** and, therefore, would not have suited the requirements of the plot.

The casting, is, therefore, more than finding an actor who is free or who has the ability to play the role; the casting is part of the complex set of decisions made which support the intended meaning of the text.

Imagine Titanic with Schwarzenegger in the role of Jack or Grant as the Terminator. How would alternative casting choices have altered these films? Apply this to other texts and it should enable you to identify more clearly the meanings created by the choices that were made.

This method can be applied to all types of choices that have been made in the construction of a text.

When the choices are considered in this way it may appear more obvious why certain choices were **not made** making it clearer why the media language used **was** selected.

Question - Consider the following:
1. *In a newspaper article why would Tony Blair be called 'Blair' and not 'the Prime Minister'?*
2. *Why was the choice of Manchester as a location important in Life on Mars? Why not Cambridge?*
3. *Why did Hello and Yes magazine select these names instead of 'Goodbye' and 'No'?*
4. *Why does 24 use split-screen at certain points and not just simple framing?*

1. Using a formal title appears more respectful than using the surname and so the choice of how to identify someone will communicate an attitude about that person.
2. Cambridge connotes history and tradition. The city is associated with its university and being a place of thought and higher learning. **Life on Mars** needed to create a gritty urban setting for its story and Manchester has connotations of a tougher urban environment than Cambridge, suiting the producers' needs more readily.

Manchester (left) and Cambridge (right). Where would you set your gritty, urban crime drama?

3. Both **Hello** and **Yes** magazine need to create the right expectations of their magazines and, through their names, want to communicate ideas about their brand, provoking connotations of positivity, happiness and entertainment for the potential buyer.
4. **24** uses spilt-screen in order to visually represent the fact that the events depicted are happening simultaneously. This assists in the construction of the appearance of 'real time' and helps create tension and urgency more effectively than simple framing.

AQA/OCR/WJEC?

Each awarding body requires that students undertake a practical analysis. The format of this examination is different for each specification and so your awarding body's documentation should be referred to for specific details. However, the skills that underpins this examination remains the same: analysis and evaluation. To undertake this there is also a need to have a good understanding of the basic underlying concepts used in media studies.

In addition, analysis skills are required when planning and evaluating coursework productions. Existing texts needs to be analysed when planning a production and the finished work will also need to be evaluated formally for the assessment.

Finally, the essay based examinations all require analysis and evaluation of media texts in order to engage on the topics/issues assessed. This is why it is such an important skill!

An A-B-C of Practical Analysis
When you are provided with a text to analyse it is often useful to consider the following before you start:

A

1. **Identify the text's form and genre. Is the text a:** charity advert? regional newspaper? women's lifestyle magazine? TV sit-com? action film trailer?

2. **Identify the text's target audience. Is it for:** youths? males? parents? a broad mainstream audience?

3. **Identify the text's primary function. Has the text been created to:** inform? entertain? sell? persuade? something else?

[It may be that the exam paper itself provides some of the answers to the above questions or indeed provides specific questions that need addressing – as always in an exam the paper must be read carefully.]

Once these three basic questions have been answered, it is then possible to question more deeply.

B

1. **How is the genre of the text identifiable?** Is it following genre codes and conventions or is it subverting them? **WHY**?

2. **How does the text identify its target audience?** In what ways does it address them? How does it try to appeal to them? In what ways will it please the audience? What assumptions does it make about the audience? **WHY**?

3. **What methods does it use to inform/entertain/sell/persuade? WHY**?

The answers to these questions should be linked to examples of media language in the text. By questioning this way, observations made are immediately getting close to being analytical as the things that are seen are being linked to the genre, the audience or the function of the text from the start. Often students begin a practical analysis by jotting down the details of what they see. This can lead to the response being very descriptive which will not gain good marks. The key is to consider **WHY** the text is constructed the way it is from the very start.

The next stage in practical analysis is to consider the effect the choices made intend to have and may have on the target audience.

C

1. Having created the text for its target audience, does the text actively exclude anyone? Who? Does the text rely on stereotypes? Are these stereotypes of the audience, of others or of both? **WHY**?

2. Are any attitudes or behaviours presented positively? Are any attitudes or behaviours presented negatively? What values does the text promote? **WHY**?

Again, the question **WHY** needs to be considered throughout. Section B considered why the text is constructed the way it is. Section C considers why the text creates the meanings it creates.


Exam Hint
Even though observations need to lead to analysis, another common error in examinations is making the conceptual analysis without providing the textual evidence to support the point being made. Textual references should be used as evidence to support ideas.

Exam Hint
Often marks are lost in an exam when essays have too much descriptive detail within them. Telling the examiner the story, summarising the plot of a text or detailing what is on the page keeps the work at the descriptive level and is not required.

Here is an advert for the perfume *Eternity* and a basic description of it. The description is purely factual and does not in any way analyse or evaluate the advert.

The word 'eternity' is written in capital letters across the top of the image. The font used is a long thin sans serif font which is also used at the bottom of the image for the words 'Calvin Klein' and 'parfum'. The background depicts a countryside scene and there is a glare which appears to have been created by sunlight. In the foreground is a woman who is smiling and carrying a child on her shoulders. Both character have their arms outstretched and, although this is not in the image, it can be assumed they are holding hands.
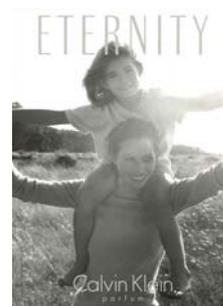
The A-B-C of Practical Analysis in Action

[*What follows is not a definitive set of ideas about the advert. Other people may make different interpretations and the analysis is in no way complete. It should also be noted that this thought process would then need to be organised and structured into an essay style response in an examination.*]

A

1. The image is a magazine advert for the perfume *Eternity* made by Calvin Klein.
2. The target audience for the advert is women, specifically women who are either parents or of an age to be parents. The perfume is a luxury product and is part of the Calvin Klein brand. This is a 'designer' product and as such is aimed at the higher socio-economic groups.
3. As an advert the text intends to persuade the audience to buy the product. However, this advert can be seen to be focussing more on creating a brand and product identity rather than acting to motivate someone to buy immediately. However, as Calvin Klein produces a range of products for different target markets, part of the function of this advert is to create a specific identity for *Eternity* which is different to that created by *CK One*.

B

1. The only thing that identifies it as a perfume advert is the word 'parfum' at the bottom of the advert. Conventionally, perfume adverts foreground the product itself - usually in the form of a perfume bottle. This confirms the idea of it being more about creating a brand identity as a perfume bottle aids recognition of the product itself which is not the main point of this advert. It also subverts an often-used technique of perfume advertising which is to associate perfume with sexual success.
2. The text identifies its target audience by using a gender specific model of a similar age to them. It uses a model who is attractive – she is then an aspiration for the target audience. Her body language shows her to be happy and the situation implies she is a mother again adding to the potential identification for the target audience who may also be mothers. The situation is also aspirational as it is set in the countryside which is often seen as an ideal location as it holds connotations of freshness, health and the freedom of open spaces. The fact that the sun is shining adds to this. This links to an ideal of childhood. The child has a happy mother, is enjoying time in the countryside and, this in turn, makes the child happy. The mother and child are depicted as being close and an ideal mother/daughter relationship is represented. This too would add to the aspirational quality of the image for the audience.
3. The advert aims to create associations between the positive imagery and the perfume *Eternity*. It is a subtle technique that relies on the audience retaining this association when purchasing perfume. This technique is specifically related to the age group and the gender of the target audience.

C

1. The advert uses stereotypes of the ideal mother. The mother here is attractive, fun, energetic and provides support and affection. With this focus on the family it may exclude women who are not parents and does not provide an image that is as attractive to young females or to men.
2. This idealised mother (and daughter) comes from an ideological perspective of women's roles within the family. It promotes the idealised nature of the rural and links these to the perfume it is promoting.

Conclusion

In order to provide an analysis of the media language of a text, it is important to identify what is there, but crucial to consider **WHY** it is there and how it makes particular meanings. When considering why, the semiological meanings created and the way the media language choice relates to other media concepts such as narrative, genre, representation and audience should also be considered.

Assessments in Media Studies do not reward the observations; it's the analysis and evaluation of the observations that are important and so it is important to practice this skill regularly until it simply becomes the way you read magazines, watch TV or respond to any media text.

Question
This is an an advert for CK One.
Repeat the process demonstrated to consider how it makes a different set of meanings to the advert for Eternity

Image sources included in Factsheet
http://i.cnn.net/cnn/2003/ALLPOLITICS/08/08/recall.arnold/vert.schwarzenegger.jpg
http://www.movie-gazette.com/directory/directory.asp?strsearch=Jude+Law
http://www.geocities.com/guidetofarrell/images/public.html;
http://www.clangrant-us.org/images/hugh.grant.jpg
www.cs.washington.edu/research/imagedatabase/
http://www.davidtoc.com

Media Studies

Media Language 1: The Moving Image

The aims of this Factsheet are:
- *To identify the main aspects of moving image media language;*
- *To briefly discuss their use and to provide a vocabulary to assist in identifying features prior to analysis.*

This Factsheet will identify some of the most commonly used aspects of moving image media language.

All moving image texts use a specific language to communicate to their audiences. Just like in written and spoken English, there is a vocabulary and a grammar to media language and in moving image texts. This language can be broken down into six main areas:

1 **Camera**
2 **Editing**
3 **Lighting**
4 **Sound**
5 **Mise-en- Scene**
6 **Special Effects: visual, sound and lighting**

As audiences, we have a sophisticated understanding of the way moving image techniques are used but often we are unaware of precisely how sophisticated we are. By identifying the way moving image media language is used, we can begin to make a closer interpretation of texts. Media producers are aware of how audiences interpret their choices and so their choices can be seen as deliberate attempts to create certain meanings. Media students need to be able to identify what choices have been made and then to consider the reasons behind these choices. Doing this enables an analysis of the media text.

Sometimes the way the moving image media language is used is specific to the form and even the genre of the media text. This needs to be taken into account when analysing media language. The following terms and ideas can be applied to all moving image texts: documentary, news broadcasts, advertising, television and film.

1. The Use of the Camera
The main aspect of moving image media language is the camera itself. There are two ways the camera is usually considered – by considering the **positioning** of the camera and the view it provides of the scene and the camera's **movement**.

Camera Positioning
The camera shows us exactly what the media producer wants us to see. Unlike at a theatre where we are free to look at any part of the stage, the media producer can control what we look at and how we look at it. The following are some of the most common uses of camera you may wish to discuss.

Camera Distance
These terms refer to the apparent distance between the viewer and the subject of the frame.

The Long Shot
A shot which contains a lot of information – often allowing the audience to view a location or it may be used to create an idea of scale. An actor shot from a distance within a busy city scene would show the audience that the character is part of a crowd; a long shot of an expanse of desert would clarify the geographical location for a scene. The still from **The Matrix** (1999: dirs. The Wachowski Bros.) allows the audience to see the scale of the battle in progress and in its context it allows a lot of action to be shown simultaneously.

Often, this type of shot is used at the start of a scene to establish exactly where the action is located. This is called an **establishing shot**. You will have seen this technique used regularly in **Friends** when scene and location changes are established with long shots of 'Central Perk' for example. An **Extreme Long Shot** is wider still and can be an eye-level view of a landscape or an overhead shot of an expanse of a city.

The Mid-Shot:
When shooting actors this is often called a 'head and shoulders' shot. The subject(s) of the shot are clearly identified and we are able to see some aspects of their location or blocking in relation to other characters. The mid-shot allows the audience to see some detail of facial expressions and the actors' responses to situations and dialogue. This is a commonly used shot and it is often used when shooting conversations. A mid-shot of the speaker is framed from over the shoulder of the listener and the camera swaps perspectives as speakers change. Sometimes both speakers are shown simultaneously in a mid-shot called a 'two-shot'.

The Close Up:
This is where the camera is positioned close to the subject of the shot. When shooting an actor, the close up would focus on the face which would fill the screen and allows the audience to view reactions or emotions. Close-ups create an intimate feeling for the audience or allow the director to focus on detail.

The Extreme Close Up:
As the name suggests, a small object or portion of the subject will fill the shot. Sometimes the extreme close up is used to focus the audience on an important piece of visual information – a significant item in the narrative, for example. At other times it can be used to literally magnify emotional responses or reactions.

Camera Angle
As well as the apparent distance we are from the action, the director will choose what angle we are to view the objects in the frame.

High Angle
When the audience views the subject from above, looking down. This can often be used to create a sense of scale and from this position subjects can look small and/or vulnerable.

Low Angle
The opposite of the above, where we look upwards towards the subject. This can create a feeling of importance or foreboding.

Eye Level Shot
An eye level shot is a shot you will be familiar with in soap operas. We view the scene as if we were there as a spectator as the camera represents the audience's view.

Point of View Shot
The camera is used as if it is the eye of one of the characters. We are seeing what the character sees. A very famous use of the p.o.v shot is in the opening sequence of **Halloween** (1978: dir. J. Carpenter) when we are forced to take the perspective of a killer.

Crane Shot:
The camera is attached to a crane and we are shown the scene from above it. This can act to create a sense of scale and/or provide lots of information.

Three stills from **The Shining** *(1980: dir. S. Kubrick)*
The three images show the use of high angle, low angle and point of view shots.

The **high angle** *reinforces the smallness of the child in the centre and emphasises the length of the corridor.*

The **low angle** *provides a shot which allows the audience to focus on the emotions of the character but it gives the audience an unusual perspective which is unsettling.*

The **p.o.v.** *in the final image shows the corridor from the child's perspective and draws the audience into the action and allows more empathy with the child's vulnerable position.*
*(*http://www.archiviokubrick.it/film/shining/foto/*)*

Camera Movement
Unlike in still photography, the moving image media producer has the ability to move the camera and so we can be directed where and how to follow the action on the screen.

There are many different types of camera movement. Three of the most commonly used are:

Track: Where the camera follows the action by moving horizontally and freely with the characters.

Pan: Similar to a tracking shot but where the camera moves horizontally whilst remaining in its fixed position.

Tilt: This is a shot like a pan but the camera moves vertically whilst it remains on its fixed axis point.

2. Editing
Editing is the process by which the media producer moves from one camera shot to another.

This is done after the shooting of the scene and is part of the post-production process it can be likened to 'sewing together' the various shots taken for the film/programme. Just like in dressmaking, this is the important aspect of the creation of a text as without it all there is are assorted pieces of 'fabric' (the shots). The 'stitches' the edits create are often so skilfully done that during casual viewing they are not visible. Sometimes edits are called transitions as they are the method used to get us from one view of the scene to another or from one scene to a new one.

As well as the **style** of edit, it is worth looking at the **speed** of editing. Some texts move between shots very quickly. This is a technique often used in music videos and MTV- type programming. On the other hand, slow editing is sometimes used. One example of this is in __Panic Room__ (2002: dir. D. Fincher) when the camera takes the audience around a house moving from floor to floor and room to room without any apparent editing. The scene appears to be one single camera move.

There are many editing techniques that can be used. The most common is the **straight cut**. This creates an apparently natural movement between shots and in many ways emulates the audience's own eye movements. Look at the way a conversation is filmed in a soap opera. The camera swaps between each speaker in just the way we would move if we were following the conversation in person. Even when the camera moves to view the speaker from behind the listener's shoulder, this appears to be a natural movement as we watch.

In addition, other editing styles include:
The Dissolve: Bringing the new shot into focus as the old one disappears from focus. At some point in a dissolve, both shots are on screen at the same time.

The Fade: Where the old image gently disappears (usually to a black screen) before the new image appears.

The Wipe: Where the new image comes onto the screen with a distinct shaped edge and seemingly 'pushes' the old one off screen. There are many different types of wipes where the new image enters from different positions and it can appear as a specific shape such as a circle. You can see many different wipe techniques in the __Star Wars__ (dir. G Lucas) series of films.

3. Lighting
The use of light is an important aspect of the creation of moving image texts. Choices will be made as to whether the lighting is to be seen as being natural or unnatural. The media producer will choose whether shadow is needed or if the scene should be brightly lit. Lighting can be coloured in order to give a specific look and feel to the text.

High Key Lighting: All areas of the frame are lit through the use of multiple lights. This is a technique used as much for nightime scenes as it is for daytime ones. High key lighting is not always bright light.

Low Key Lighting: This is where some areas of the frame are lit more than others and, through the use of selected lights, areas of shadow and darkness are created.

Coloured Lighting: Coloured lights are used to give a particular effect to a scene. A golden glow is often used to light a scene where a soft, flattering effect is required. Less natural lighting colours can be used to create a particular effect within the frame. __The Matrix__ series uses different hues of colour to light the scene depending on which location (the matrix (green), the real world (blue), Zion (gold)) we are in.

Diegetic Lighting: Lighting that appears to emanate from a source within the scene, e.g. a lamp, a torch or the sun.

Location of the Light Source: The positioning of the light source can also create dramatic effects within a frame. **Up lighting** (where the source of the light is below the subject) can often be used to create strange shadow effects and **overhead lighting** tends to act as a spotlight or may be used to create a glow over the subject.

4. Sound
When discussing the sound in music image texts, this includes the use of music, dialogue, sound effects, special effects, voice-overs, dialogue etc.

Diegetic Sound: Sound that emanates from an object and that exists within the world of the text. Music coming from a car stereo for example.

Non-diegetic Sound: Sound that does not exist in the world of the text – the musical soundtrack for example.

On Screen sound: Diegetic sound that comes from objects observable within the frame.

Off Screen sound: Diegetic sound that comes from objects not seen within the frame. For example, the sound of a car approaching a house on the road outside as we view the interior.

Parallel Sound (synchronous): Sound or music which matches the kind of action on the screen for example, a romantic ballad accompanying a love scene.

Contrapuntal Sound (asynchronous): Sound or music which does not match the action on the screen. An up-beat pop song used to accompany violent images on screen, as in the use of 'Stuck in the Middle with You' during __Reservoir Dogs__ (1992: dir. Q. Tarantino.)

Exam Hint
The identification of media language and the correct use of terminology should be the starting point for your analysis. You should learn the correct terms and be able to spot the techniques used but then go on to discuss the reasons why these choices have been made and what effect they have.

5. Mise-en-Scene
The mise-en-scene means 'that which is placed within the scene'. As such it relates to a large number of choices made by the media producer in the construction of what is seen on the screen.

Some aspects include:

Location and Setting: The physical place that the scene is set, whether this is internal (a well-equipped, modern kitchen) or external (the city of New York). The location and setting is chosen carefully to add to the meaning that is required by the scene or the text.

Set Dressing: How the setting is presented to the audience. This can include the décor of an internal location or the landscape shown of an external location and will include **props** which are the objects which are used by the actors or that are part of the set dressing.

Costume: The clothes chosen for characters to wear are often an indicator of personality or status, as is the use of make-up.

Dialogue: The words of a script are, of course, crucial in informing the audience about character types we are presented with and they act to develop the action of a narrative.

Casting: The choice of actors is an important part of the creation of a text. An actor needs to have the right 'look' for the character the director wants to create. Part of this look may also be the actor's public persona.

Body Language/Acting Styles: Another important part of the construction of the mise en scene. The style of acting and the way the actors respond to the action is part of the meaning of a text.

Framing/Blocking: The relative positioning of actors and objects within a frame. For example, bringing one character forward of another in a conversation implies that this is the dominant or more important character.

Activity
To understand how many choices are made when constructing a moving image text, it is useful to pause a scene from a film or television programme and list as many of the elements that have gone into making the 'still image' as possible. Use this handout as a check list to identify the camera angle, camera distance, lighting source, lighting effects and individual aspects of the mise en scene. Once you have created this list ask yourself why each choice was made. Use your analysis skills to identify the reasons for the selections, and therefore, the intended meaning behind those choices.

Exam Hint
Clearly, none of these techniques is used alone. In any single frame of a moving image text there will be a combination of camera, lighting, mise en scene, special effect and sound choices present. These individual elements need to be considered together when analysing a media text rather than separately. For further information on creating an analysis from your observations, see the Factsheets on Analysis and Semiotic Theory.

6. Special Effects (SFX)
Special effects are usually added after filming and are used to enhance the images and sounds for the scene. Sound Effects may be added to emphasise certain moments, for example the adding of a creaking sound to raise suspense when a door opens.

Many special effects are used to create images that cannot be created by the camera. **Green/Blue Screen Technology** is used to superimpose images onto another and can be used to place an actor into a location. **Computer Generated Imagery** (**CGI**) is used to add to what can be created on film. This can range from the creation of futuristic locations in a science fiction or can be used to generate whole characters, for example the robots in **I, Robot** (2004: dir. A. Proyas).
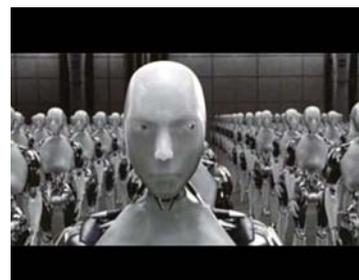
CGI is an expensive technology and is less likely to be used in TV texts such as soap operas which are made quickly on relatively low budgets. You will, however, see CGI in higher budget TV texts which have longer production times (e.g **CSI**). CGI is becoming a mainstay of Hollywood film making – particularly in high budget blockbuster texts. Some films are created using CGI to create the whole of the mise en scene as in **Sin City** (2005: dir. R Roderiguez).

AQA/OCR/WJEC?
The identification of moving image media language is a crucial aspect of all areas of study. It is important to identify the techniques used by media producers when preparing for textual analysis. In addition, an understanding of the effects of media language is crucial in the planning of your own media production.

Image web sources
www.hollywoodjesus.com
www.matrix.thescarymonkeyshow.com
www.magieheim.atwww.magieheim.at
http://img.photobucket.com
http://www.archiviokubrick.it/film/shining/foto/
nanopedia.cwru.edu/image/I.Robot.jpg

Media Studies

Ideology: Ideas and Values within Contemporary Media

The aims of this Factsheet are to provide:
1. A definition of Ideology with key terms.
2. Methods to help you identify ideology in a media text.
3. Examples of how to evaluate ideologies in a media text.

A definition: the key concept Ideology is a study of the values and attitudes that arise from the construction of the other key concepts in a media text. Ideologies can be *connoted* from the use of media language or from a particular representation such as a stereotype, or from the narrative roles and events.

Key Term

Connotations: How we interpret signs around us is heavily influenced by the culture we grew up in as well as our individual life and cultural experiences. The associations we add to images and words are known as *connotations*. When we speak or write about *connotations* we are trying to understand the meaning associated with a sign (such as an image or piece of text).

For example, in our culture we have several associations or *connotations* of a lion: it is seen as a majestic creature, a leader of other animals, and therefore it is often used as a symbol of monarchy.

In this way, the lion's qualities are then transferred to the monarchy, since we perceive them as being associated. Therefore Kings and Queens are seen to be brave, strong and dominant, just like a lion.

The image, from **The Lion King** (1994) represents the lion as a powerful, noble creature, bathed in sunlight as though chosen by heaven. Disney are playing on our connotations of 'lion' to help create additional meaning and depth to this animated character. It is clear in this image that the lions will be the heroes of the film. *[image\; adisney.go.com]*

The Institution behind the production of a text often determines, or more informally influences, the ideology to be found in a text. For example, **The Sun** newspaper has openly supported both the Conservative party and the Labour Party in the last thirty years, and has written stories designed to persuade readers to vote in a particular way.

The headline below is from the Guardian website. It demonstrates that politicians and newspapers often share similar aims and similar value systems. However, it also tells us that **The Guardian** has a negative attitude towards its rival, **The Sun**, and Tony Blair.

No 10 'worked with Sun to manage news'

http://media.guardian.co.uk/site/story/0,14173,1223281,00.html?=rss

The word 'manage' is used by the **The Guardian** to tell us that the ideology represented in **The Sun** has been chosen deliberately through discussion with the government. In Media Studies we call this *construction*. The values of a media text are not accidental they are carefully *constructed*, often to the advantage of the institution. In the headline above **The Guardian** is suggesting that news in **The Sun** was *constructed* implying that The Guardian views this as negative. The headline identifies The Guardian's apparent ideological position on the issue of collaboration between the press and politicians and this adds to its own image as being part of a free, democratic press.

Key Term

Construction: This key term helps us describe the way a media text is put together. It tells an examiner that you understand a text has been made in a particular way for a particular reason. A newspaper *constructs* a headline; a studio *constructs* a film; a TV channel *constructs* its listings. Nothing is accidental, all meaning in the media is *constructed*.

A media text may reflect the *dominant values* of our culture, or indeed it may actively reinforce the dominant values, but it is important to note that media texts often challenge, contradict or even *subvert* the dominant values to be found in our society.

An historical media text, such as an old film or newsreel, can tell us much about the values of the society that created the text.

This photograph (left) from the BBC website provides a fascinating view of people pulling together under very difficult circumstances during the war. The common view (or *dominant* view) of British society as more racist in the past than it is now is here challenged by the unity connoted through this picture

http://www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar/stories/28/a2045828.shtml

of three white people and a black woman standing together. Also, the photo tells us that women were a very important part of the community during the war, holding it together in the absence of so many young men. So, this photo communicates information about race and gender values in the 1940s.

Key Terms
Dominant Values or *Dominant Ideology*: ideas and values that hold importance in our culture and which also inform our cultural practices. The importance of the individual, for example, is a dominant value in our society, as is the right to free speech. Dominant values can become so frequent and natural to us that they seem like common sense.

Audience and Ideology: Stuart Hall's critical approach
A text may seek to confirm (agree with) dominant values, challenge them or even undermine them, but the text's intention doesn't necessarily dictate the audience's *response*. Outlined below are three broad ways (developed by **Stuart Hall**) in which the audience could respond to the ideological messages in a text.
1. A *preferred* reading, when the audience responds by accepting the intended meaning of the producer and finding it relatively easy to agree with the ideological messages in the text.
2. An *oppositional* reading, when the audience rejects the intentions of the text.
3. A *negotiated* reading, when the audience works hard to accept some messages and reject others

The most common type of reading is probably the *negotiated* reading. It is incorrect to assume that audiences simply seek out texts that will reinforce their existing beliefs and try to avoid texts that will challenge them. Audiences are capable of actively accepting and rejecting ideological messages from the same text. You can use **Stuart Hall's** terms to describe the three possible ways an audience could react to a text's ideology.

Genre and Ideology
Once we identify the genre of a text it can help us to identify the ideology as well, although it would be a generalisation to say that genre pre-determines the ideology of a text. For example, iconography from the blockbuster Action genre may give rise to positive representations of individual heroism, the military (nearly always American, unless it is the British Secret Service), nationalism and patriotic sentiment, as well as negative portrayals of foreign military activity, foreign governments and groups who endorse value systems different to the West.

Representations	Connotations
The hero with a gun	Defending freedom, defending the individual.
The sneering villain	A cynical threat to British-American values and a representation of the people who threaten those values.
Explosions	Destruction of property and of value systems – or the destruction of the enemy, so it can be viewed as good or bad in different situations.
The American city	The location of freedom and the arena of the struggle for freedom

In the list of representations above we can connote an ideological value that could be said to be typical of the Action genre. **Die Hard** (1988) arranges the representations mentioned above in a clear pattern so that all the positive representations, such as the hero with the gun, are clearly identified as American and the negative representations, such as the sneering villain, are European.

We can use **Stuart Hall's** approach to understand the way the audience might react.
1. A *preferred reading* of **Die Hard** would confirm the belief that Europe is a dangerous continent with fanatics who will kill in the name of outdated ideologies whilst Americans will stand and fight against ideological corruption, even if some corporate Americans are willing to negotiate with the European terrorists.
2. An *oppositional reading* might simply reject the idea that Europeans are terrorists and Americans are heroes.
3. A *negotiated reading* will understand that the representations are an exaggeration but that the film is meant to be entertaining and exciting, not persuasive.

Binary Opposites: another critical approach
Another way of understanding ideology in a media text is by arranging the values in a list of *binary opposites* (see below for definition) using one pair of opposites as headers, in this case *America* and *Europe*:

Binary opposites in **Die Hard**

America	Europe
Democratic and egalitarian	Run by individuals
Heroic	Cowardly and vicious
Driven by ideals such as family and property	Corrupt – a threat to family and property

So, binary opposites are a very useful way of understanding ideology in a media text when it has two distinct value systems in conflict with each other. Although in Britain we are European we identify with the Americans in **Die Hard** because we share the same values that they are portrayed as having. Therefore a *preferred* reading of **Die Hard** would include an understanding from the audience of American culture as democratic and fair.

However, there are Action films which contain ideological values that are not so easily understood as 'right' and 'wrong' and therefore cannot be arranged so easily as *binary opposites*. Even **Die Hard** can be tricky – the terrorists are more interested in money than fanatical causes, it transpires.

Key Term
Binary opposites: a list of ingredients in a media text that can be placed opposite each other to represent opposing value systems. The list can include events from the narrative, themes, or representation in the media language.
Common binary opposites include good/bad, male/female, human/inhuman.

In the Action blockbuster **Independence Day** (1996) lots of different nations are represented, often through the icon of a national flag, but this time they are working together to defeat a common enemy, an invading force of aliens. The values of friendship, common interest and humanity are represented in several shots:
• The use of a cut from some pilots with an Israeli flag in the background to a shot with pilots standing next to a Palestinian flag could encourage the audience to see the two groups of people as sharing many things in common, even though they have historically been at war with each other.
• The representation of the alien ship as a shadow which covers the moon and then covers the earth, encouraging the viewer to regard the aliens as the enemy in opposition to the human race.

- A Black American and Jewish American flying the space ship together. The Black American is represented as more confident and in a position of leadership which demonstrates a very positive racial attitude in the text's ideology.

The generic conventions in **Independence Day** also communicate ideology:

- The use of explosions to connote the destruction of the earth, but also the destruction of the aliens who wish to enslave humanity.
- The hero with a gun or, in this case, a space ship and missile, anything that represents power.
- American cities as places of freedom, until the arrival of the aliens.

The codes we associate with a genre (the images), and the conventions we associate with a genre (the things that happen) can give us a lot of clues about the ideology of a text. All the codes and conventions mentioned above can be found in TV texts such as **24**, which also have a very similar ideology to the films we have looked at.

We also know that we can apply binary opposites to the codes and conventions as a way of understanding a text's ideology. Let's try applying binary opposites to **Independence Day** using *Humans* and *Aliens* as headers.

Humans	Aliens
A collection of individuals – different races, sexes and nationalities.	All identical – they have no individuality.
Family – the President is like a father to the whole world, but many other characters become closer to their father during the course of the film.	Hierarchy – the aliens are not seen to interact, they merely follow orders. We see thousands of them in ships.
Freedom – the humans volunteer to fight, they are not pressed into anything.	Enslavement – the aliens' lack of individuality implies they are not free to be themselves.

Stereotypes are an excellent way of combining analysis of both representation and ideology. A stereotype is a single character which is used to represent a larger group. In **Independence Day** Will Smith plays a Black pilot as a brave, talented individual who wants to marry his girlfriend and be a father to her child. This very positive representation of Black Americans contrasts with the many media texts where Black people are portrayed as troublesome and irresponsible, or as simply a helper to a white hero.

Media Language and Ideology

Only a detailed reading of the Media Language in a text can provide a thorough knowledge of the way ideology is working in a media text. The following section is a close reading of two still images from **V for Vendetta** (2006).

A reminder – Media Language in a moving-image text is composed of five elements:

- **Camera**
- **Lighting**
- **Mise En Scene**
- **Editing**
- **Sound**

An analysis of the ideology in two shots from **V for Vendetta** (McTeigue, 2005):

image from **V for Vendetta**

1. Identify representations in the Media Language

- This still from **V for Vendetta** presents us with the image of the tower with the clock and the famous bell, Big Ben, at the Houses of Parliament.
- The image is iconic because it is recognisable not just as a clock tower but as *the* clock tower at the houses of Parliament.
- In this particular image from the *mise en scene* the tower is exploding against a night sky, the flames bursting through the face of the clock seem very light against the darkness of the sky. This use of *low-key lighting* is very dramatic.

2) Analyse and describe the connotations of the representation

- The image of the Houses of Parliament immediately communicates that the film is set in London which is recognisable to British and overseas audiences as the capital city, as well as the political and financial centre of Britain. The Houses of Parliament frequently form the backdrop to political news stories and interviews, so it is not unfair to say that they connote a sense of British politics, so **V for Vendetta** may be a political film.
- The flames, bursting through the clock face, denote an explosion. Explosions connote destruction. Clearly, this explosion is destroying the tower at the Houses of Parliament. If we consider the Action genre then explosions are usually exciting – they are a *pleasure* that we associate with the genre. Therefore, the image above connotes not just the destruction of the Houses of Parliament, but a *joyful* or exciting destruction.

3) Place the connotations in a context

- The genre of the film is Action, connoted through the explosions but also through the martial arts and special effects represented in the film on several occasions. The film is about a near future, where the government controls the people in a very strict manner, often using the media to spread lies. Therefore, the image of the destruction of the Houses of Parliament, which might ordinarily be an alarming sight, is actually a joyful moment in the text because it signifies the destruction of a corrupt, totalitarian government.

- The context can be developed further if we have a knowledge of Guy Fawkes and the conspiracy to destroy the Houses of Parliament in the seventeenth century. The failure of that plot is celebrated with fireworks every November 5th, so it is ironic that the success of the plot in **V for Vendetta** should be celebrated by the audience. This may indicate that the film is challenging *dominant values* by suggesting that the destruction of national monuments could be justified under certain circumstances.

www.2theadvocate.com

1. Identify representations in the Media Language

- This *close-up* enables us to see two characters who are in conflict with each other.
- One character is dressed in a white mask with a beard and moustache painted on; the other character is red in the face and has a prominent wound on his forehead. The red and white colours are interesting *binary oppositions*.

Activity: what other binary oppositions can you identify in this still image?

2) Analyse and describe the connotations of the representation

- The broad-brimmed hat and white mask are connotative of Guy Fawkes, so once again the representation is reminding us of rebellion and destruction.
- The shirt and tie on the man with the bruise could represent authority and respectability, so the rebellion of the Guy Fawkes character is aimed at the authority of the other character.

Activity: Try filling in the binary opposites in the table below.

Rebellion	Authority

3) Place the connotations in a context

- On a simple level the image seems to represent a man dressed as a historical terrorist assaulting another man who is dressed in a respectable manner. This is not something most people would support and it therefore challenges *dominant values*. However, when we consider that the film is about a government which tightly controls people, the idea of assaulting a 'respectable'

person becomes less offensive and starts to seem like a representation of freedom rather than assault.
- Therefore, the explosion in the first image becomes a way of freeing the Houses of Parliament from the tyranny of dictatorship, rather than the destruction of British democracy. If we read it in this way, the film seems to be supporting the *dominant values* of our society by upholding ideologies of freedom and democracy.

The different possible readings indicate that the audience needs to *negotiate* their own reading, as a *preferred* or *oppositional* might be quite difficult.

Conclusion

- This factsheet aimed to offer a definition of ideology, using phrases like *construction* and *dominant values* to help you understand that ideology is created, and it is created for a reason.
- You were shown that the ideology of a media text can be shaped by the *institution* that creates the text, and can be read in three different ways by the audience as shown by **Stuart Hall**.
- You were introduced to two different ways of identifying the ideology in a text, using *genre* and using *binary oppositions*.
- Finally, you were shown how a detailed reading of the *representation* in the *media language* can be used to analyse and evaluate the ideology.

Activity: Select a media text you are familiar with, such as a film or a news article, and identify some examples of representation in the media language. Next, analyse the connotations and consider what type of values they represent. You could use the table below.

Representation	Values

Introduction to Semiology (Semiotics)

The aims of this Factsheet are to
- introduce the concept of semiology and show how it can be used to assist with analysis and evaluation of media texts
- define key semiological terminology and provide examples of their use within a media studies context
- identify how semiology can help the analysis of media texts in relation to a range of media concepts

Semiology is an approach that can be used to understand how media texts make meaning for their audiences. There will be no exam question on semiology but it is a useful set of ideas to help you approach the analysis of any media text. The approach can be applied to all forms of media texts from newspapers and magazines to documentaries and soap operas. Semiology provides a way of thinking about media texts which can help you consider how media texts make meaning and it provides a vocabulary which will help you discuss this in essays and textual analysis.

Signs
All media texts are constructed using a variety of **signs**. Everything that can be seen or heard on a screen or that is on a page is a sign. A sign is a discrete unit of meaning. Signs are not limited to words but also include images, gestures and sounds - essentially all of the ways in which information can be communicated within a media text.

In Media Studies, all the many media language choices that combine together to make the finished media text are signs:
- In **paper based media**, both text and images are signs
- In **moving image media**, text all aspects of mis en scene, camerawork, editing and sound can be considered as signs

Every sign that we see has been carefully chosen by the media producer and, therefore, we need to accept that these signs have a meaning and/or a specific purpose.

Activity
Which of the following signs would you include in an advert where you wanted to:
a) warn your audience about the dangers of fire
b) show that your ready meal was suitable for vegetarians
c) identify that your film had received excellent reviews

note – the symbol is green   *note – the first four stars are yellow and the fifth grey*   *note - the circle and the diagonal line are red*

AQA/WJEC/OCR?
Semiology is a way to help you analyse the media language of media texts. In exams and coursework, regardless of the awarding body, you will need to consider how media language communicates meaning to its audience and what the effect of media language choices are. In an exam you would not have to describe this approach or even use the word 'semiology'. You can demonstrate your understanding of the concept by using the terms that follow in your work. In addition, when producing your practical work, you can improve the effectiveness of your products by considering the semiological meanings of your media

A number of different images could have been used to signify vegetarian food. The 'no naked flame' sign in the red circle could be adapted to do this by including an image of a cow or a burger inside the red circle. This would communicate the same meaning – that the food contains no meat – as the green V.

The sign used to indicate that food is suitable for vegetarians is visually very simple. However, the way it constructs meaning for the reader is very sophisticated and the meanings go beyond the fact that the food contains no meat.

- Although it is meant to represent the letter V (for vegetarian) the sign also looks like a tick

- The image is usually reproduced in green

- The right hand side of the V is embellished with a shape that looks like a leaf

These elements combine together to create the sign are all extremely important in creating, not only a literal meaning (the sign identifies vegetarian food), but also deeper meanings for the sign.

- The tick is a positive image – it is used to show when something is correct

- In our culture, green holds a range of associations. Primarily we associate green with nature

- The leaf adds to our associations of nature and, of course, represents plants or, importantly here, vegetables

The sign draws in ideas of health and nature and appears very positive. All of these aspects combine when we look at the image and interpret what it means.

Denotation and Connotation

Already a range of ideas from semiology are being used when discussing these images. An important concept in semiology is that all signs hold different levels of meaning – the **denotative level** and to **connotative level**:

1. Denotation – the denotational level
- Denotation is the literal meaning/description of a word/object
  - The 'no naked flame' sign consists of a red circle with a diagonal bar through it and an image of a lit match

2. Connotation – the connotational level
- Connotations are the associations that are made when interpreting a sign
  - Red is a colour associated with danger
  - The 'no naked flame' sign is similar in shape to 'no smoking' signs

> **Exam Hint: -** *Examiners' reports often focus on the fact that higher grades can be achieved where 'analysis outweighs description'. An essay which focuses only on denotations will be purely descriptive and, therefore achieve poorer grades. An essay that discusses connotations is providing an analysis. In your work **mention** denotations but **discuss** connotations.*

An Example – The *Brokeback Mountain* Film Poster

http://www.moviemaze.de/media/wallpaper/1825/brokeback-mountain.html

Denotation

This picture denotes the following:
- The background of a blue sky with a large white cloud
- A mountain range and a forest on the horizon across the centre of the image
- The reflections of the mountains and the forest in a lake or river
- Two young men in denim jackets and hats looking downwards and facing away from each other

Connotations

The signs used for this poster also hold a range of connotations. Here are some examples. You may be able to come up with some more:
- The landscape connotes a natural environment. Mountains, forests and lakes are specifically associated with vast, open areas of the countryside and this has connotations, not just of nature, but also of freedom
- The colours used in the poster are all 'natural': blues, greens and browns. Again this adds to the idea of the countryside and nature
- The clothes worn by the characters are associated with cowboys
- Cowboys are associated with the western **genre** in film. However, the other signs used are not like a western: the lettering is different, the colours associated with a western are golds and browns as the landscape used in a western is more usually a desert
- The connotations of the body language of the characters are quite negative. Their facial expressions are serious and sombre and the way they look down connotes some form of problem – perhaps a **conflict**, shame or sorrow
- The fact that the characters are not looking at each other reinforces the idea of a conflict. The way they are positioned suggests that the conflict is between them but it is not a conflict based on anger and violence as they are positioned close together. This images connotes a more emotional conflict

- One character is wearing a black hat, the other a white one. In westerns this was used to indicate the **hero** and the **villain**. Looking at the poster, this seems to indicate that the character in the black hat causes the **conflict** for the other man. This is reinforced by the positioning of the characters, the man in the black hat is in the background and this connotes an idea of him being an influence on the other character

> *Activity:*
> *If you have seen* Brokeback Mountain*, consider how this connotational reading of the poster links to the content and themes of the film itself.*

> **Exam Hint :** *Notice how this analysis of the film poster is leading to discussions on other media concepts: **genre**, **narrative** and **representation** specifically. Using this method and focussing on connotational readings, a deeper analysis of a range of media concepts can be developed and this is required in most assessments.*

Those Hats

There is no reason why white should represent goodness, innocence or purity but in our culture these are some of the connotations of that colour. The 'meaning' of colours has been mentioned several times here and this highlights another important idea within semiology. The meaning of many signs is **arbitrary**. There is no cause and effect link between white and innocence or red and danger. The meanings these colours hold are, however, clearly understood by members of our culture. We have agreed this is what the colours represent and interpret them accordingly. This is called a **negotiated meaning**. Negotiated meanings are shared by people within the same culture but may vary between cultures or groups. Wearing black at a funeral in China would be interpreted (read) as being disrespectful. White is the norm for funeral clothing in a number of cultures, but the opposite is the case here. Clearly the meaning of colours has been negotiated differently in the different cultures, demonstrating that this is arbitrary. There is no colour that is *actually* disrespectful – this has been determined by the cultures' different histories and traditions. The people who share an understanding of these associations are called the **language culture**. They have a **cultural agreement** as to the appropriate way to interpret the meaning of colours.

Similarly, not all signs mean only one thing. Where red can represent danger, it can also represent passion, romance or love. A sign that has a number of potential meanings is called **polysemic**. So, how do we know which interpretation to make?

Context and Anchorage

Context

The correct way to interpret the colour red is often based on the context it is shown in. Red's connotation of danger is used in many warning signs and so the circle with a diagonal bar is the **context** of our interpretation. **Anchorage** is a term used to describe how the combination of elements in a sign work together to fix meaning and interpretation. (Of course, the circle with a diagonal bar on its own does not mean danger – it was an **arbitrary** choice that has been adopted by our **language culture** to mean a specific thing). Where red is used in heart shapes at the start of a romance film (the context), the audience would not interpret this as a warning, more an indication of the romantic content of the film to come.

Anchorage

Anchorage is the way that different media language elements combine to help fix meaning. Print based media texts will use anchorage to help readers interpret the photographs they use to illustrate their stories and articles. You may have noticed that photographs often have captions or appear close to headings and headlines. This is used to attempt to ensure that the audience interpret the picture as the newspaper or magazine intended.

Activity
Look at this picture of Tony Blair and George Bush. There is not enough information in the image itself to know for sure what is going on and so the image is polysemic and could be interpreted in many different ways by the reader.

Create a number of headings or captions for the image that will create different meanings for the picture.

e.g. **Blair and Bush Announce Ceasefire**

www.guardian.co.uk

… but what if the picture was accompanied by the following caption?

Bush to Blair: 'I know it's red, white and blue. But tell me again, which flag is mine?'

The image has not changed but the meaning it holds has. You can probably come up with several more ways to anchor the image to create different meanings and, therefore, interpretations of this image.

This exercise indicates how important the consideration of anchorage is when analysing media texts as meaning can be altered by the way media language elements are chosen. Media producers use anchorage to attempt to direct the readers' interpretations and, therefore, to create meaning.

Activity

http://lingerie.alinassecrets.com/wallpaper_detail.php?ix=721

[cropped image]

This image was originally reproduced in black and white but the bra is in colour and it is red.

As an advert, the image suggests that the bra is the product being sold. In the cropped image, there is no specific selling point other than the fact that the model looks good in it. However, look at the full advert below. What does the phrase 'Who needs mistletoe?' add to the readers' understanding of the text? How has anchorage been applied here to help lead the reader understand the message of the advert?

The cropped image denotes a model in her underwear. The facial expression, body language and use of red all connote sexuality. The model's arms are raised above her head connoting submission. The positioning of her head suggests flirtation and seduction.

In the full advert, anchorage has been used to promote a desired reading and the function and purpose of the advert is clear. The advertiser's use if the phrase "Who needs mistletoe?" implies that the Wonderbra provides all a woman needs to make her sexually alluring. This prompts the reader to associate the product with desirability and should help persuade the target audience to desire and, hopefully, purchase the product.
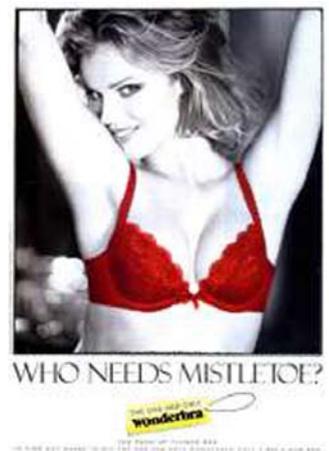
Words on the Page

Image analysis is an important aspect of Media Studies, but so too is the analysis of words as identified by the impact of anchorage. It is important for Media students to understand how the words used in media texts construct meaning and semiology can help here too, whether it is in the analysis of dialogue in moving image texts or in the written word in paper based Media.

A Practical Example – A Headline from *The Times*

The headline reads: **'Terrorist gang held in hunt for killers of British hostage'**.
http://www.thebunce.co.uk/basuism/the-times-newspaper-front-cover.jpg

Each word has been carefully chosen by the writer to:
a) communicate a summary of the main point of the story to follow
b) to construct a very specific set of meanings regarding the event reported

The individual words can be analysed for their connotational meaning:

Word Used	Connotational Interpretation
Terrorist	The word 'terrorist' holds negative connotations. Terrorists are associated with evil violent acts and connotations include unpredictable fanatical behaviour which is often religiously motivated, and seen as irrational and illogical
Gang	This word also holds negative connotations. Gangs are associated with violence and, as a group, are seen to threaten the law abiding
Held	This is an active verb that has subtle associations with violence or force
Hunt for Killers	The connotations of the words are wholly negative and this phrase is interesting as the word 'hunt' has reduced the suspects to the position of animals. The word 'killers' also dehumanises as the people are not seen as complex people with beliefs and motivations but they are defined solely by an act
British Hostage	Given the fact that this is a British newspaper the use of this phrase enable to audience to identify with the captives

Through an analysis of the connotations of the words chosen it is clear that the language has **ideological** meaning in its connotations. To make this clearer, it is useful to take a step back to the denotational meaning of the words used.

Word Used	Denotational Meaning
Terrorist	One who uses violence against largely non military target – usually driven by religious or ideological beliefs and in retaliation against a larger, dominant force
Gang	A group of individuals who share a common identity
Held	To be occupied or in the control of others
Hunt for Killers	Search for those who terminate life
Hostage	A prisoner who is held to ensure that specified terms will be met

Given that there are always many ways to say the same thing in English, the headline could have been constructed in several ways whilst still holding the same denotational meaning:

- Rebels group detained in murder investigation
- Freedom fighters captured in search for executioners …and, depending on your viewpoint….
- Heroes arrested for questioning over death of a political detainee

This analysis is not intended to question the moral position taken by the newspapers in their choice of language but simply to point out that there is one. Each word in the headline holds connotations based on the **negotiated meaning** understood by the **language culture**. Different choices may have the same denotational meanings, but the connotations would create different interpretations on the event being reported.

Activity
Take a headline from a daily newspaper or a magazine and replace words with others that have similar denotational meaning. Create two or three new headlines in this way and identify how the meaning of the headlines change because of the differences in the connotational meaning of the words you have selected.

Summary

- Semiological analysis provides a range of ways of thinking about media language which can help identify more than just the surface meaning of the words and images of a media text. This can provide an understanding of the way the media language constructs meaning for the audience
- These techniques can help a textual analysis deal with wider media issues such as genre, narrative, representation and ideology.
- This approach recognises the active nature of the audience in using their cultural knowledge and understanding to construct meaning
- The approach identifies the active nature of the producing institutions in creating meaning within their media texts

Applying Structuralism and Post-Structuralism

The aims of this Factsheet are to:
- **identify key ideas within structuralism and post-structuralism**
- **demonstrate how both theories can be applied to media texts**
- **illustrate how case studies can be used in A2 Media Studies exams**

It is essential at A2-Level that theory is applied appropriately to specific media texts and this factsheet, along with factsheet 059 **Using Theory for A2 students: A Practical Guide**, will help you to understand how you can use the ideas of structuralism and post-structuralism in your studies. These theoretical perspectives give possible explanations for how audiences determine meaning from media products so are useful when considering audience theories or conducting textual analysis.

> **Definition**
> **Structuralism** is a theoretical perspective that emphasises the existence of universal structures underlying the surface differences and assumed randomness of various cultures, stories and media texts. For example, this theory suggests that there are 'structures' inherent in narratives so patterns can be observed even across texts that appear to be unconnected.

What is Structuralism?

(http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/story/2009/11/10/f-vp-handler.html)

Claude Levi-Strauss

The origins of structuralism can be traced to ***Course in General Linguistics*** **(1916)** by the Swiss linguist **Ferdinand de Saussure**. He wrote about the development of human language and **semiotics** (the study of how meaning is created by signs). These ideas were then developed by the anthropologist **Claude Levi-Strauss**, who attempted to analyse the structures of the myths and stories in tribal societies. He argued that members of a specific society make sense of the world around them through their culture, including the structures of its social relationships and its myths.

To this end, he believed that everyone is born into a culture and learns to use the ways of thinking that are part of that culture to make sense of the world around them. For Levi-Strauss, the individual is unimportant, it is an understanding of the structure of a society which explains the thinking and behaviour of individuals within it. Levi-Strauss believed that the structures of a society reflect the universal structures of the human mind. Whether people are from primitive tribal societies or advanced industrial societies, they respond to the same common structures of thought. There are, he argued, hidden structures that determine how people live their everyday lives and these form people's social relations. For example, in terms of kinship ties, he identified four types of relationship:
1. marriage (husband – wife)
2. siblings (brother -sister)
3. filiation (parent – child)
4. avuncular (uncle/aunt – nephew/niece)

He believed that these kinship relations reflect underlying structures in a culture and, by knowing the nature of one element in a structure, it is possible to predict the form taken by the other elements. All societies are made up of the same kinship relations listed above, but they are not always evident in exactly the same way. In addition, Levi-Strauss argued that the way in which ideas are represented in thought and language often takes the form of **binary oppositions**, which is evident in the above kinship relations as husband / wife, parent / child.

> *Activity*
> ***Think about Levi-Strauss' use of binary oppositions and make lists of adjectives that are associated with the terms 'husband' as opposed to 'wife', 'brother' as opposed to 'sister', and 'parent' as opposed to 'child'. Look for patterns and think about how the binary opposition link to other opposites. For example, do your lists suggest one person has more power than the other?***

Levi-Strauss saw language as an important aspect of culture because it allows people to categorise and represent objects and ideas with symbols. The way that ideas are represented in human thought and language usually takes the form of binary opposites such as life / death or light / dark. For example, in his 1969 work ***The Raw and the Cooked***, Levi-Strauss explains binary opposites in relation to food. In its raw state food can be transformed in two ways: the natural way, by rotting, or the cultural way, by cooking, so the distinction between raw and cooked food is symbolic of the distinction between nature and culture. Generally animals eat food raw whilst humans eat food cooked just as humans live in societies with cultures but animals do not.

Structuralism and the media

Structuralism, when applied to the media, involves looking for patterns across a selection of texts rather than focusing on a single text. For example, **Roland Barthes** (1974) argued that there are similar **narrative codes** that are identifiable across a range of media texts. These are **action codes, enigma codes** and **symbolic codes** and can be explained as follows.

Roland Barthes
(http://static.guim.co.uk/sys-images/Books/Pix/pictures/2009/3/19/1237481049714/Roland-Barthes-Paris-1979-002.jpg)

Action codes	An action that prompts the audience to follow the narrative and draws them in such as a gun fight in a western, or a woman packing a suitcase in a hurry in a thriller.
Enigma codes	These tend to be questions that the audience tries to answer, usually ahead of the protagonist, such as wondering why certain actions are significant in crime dramas.
Symbolic codes	The audience is involved in identifying the major structural themes of the text that are often expressed through **binary opposites**. In crime-based drama this is manifested in the opposition between police and criminals (good versus evil).

In addition to codes within a narrative, **Tzvetan Todorov** identified a structure for narratives as a whole. At the beginning there is a state of **equilibrium** or balance that is disrupted by some force or agency (which could also create an enigma) which leads to a state of **disequilibrium.** This can only be remedied by taking **action** against the cause of the disruption but, whilst this will **resolve** the disequilibrium and restore balance, it will also change the narrative in some way and create a **new equilibrium**.

Similarly, **Vladimir Propp** identified a number of character types (or character functions) in folk tales that were evident across a range of stories and can be applied to modern texts. The ones most commonly found are identified below:

Hero	This character is usually on a quest or departs on a quest in the story.
Villain	The Villain thwarts the Hero or struggles with him in some way.
Princess/ Heroine	The Hero's prize is usually a sought for person who exists as a goal for the Hero and the Hero's journey is often ended by him marrying the Princess, thereby beating the Villain.
Donor	The Donor prepares the hero or provides him with some sort of magic talisman to help on his quest**.**
Helper	The Helper aids the Hero on his quest.

Activity
Choose a film you have seen recently and apply both Todorov's narrative structure and Propp's character functions to the story. You could also look for action, enigma and symbolic codes within the film's narrative. Use the True Grit *case study below to help you get started.*

Genre and Auteur Theory
Genre and **auteur theory** are also examples of a structuralist way of analysing texts. Structuralist approaches to genre emphasise patterns that can be identified across a range of texts and usually focus on identifying key conventions within a genre.

These include:

- particular narrative structures such as the 'rise and fall' structure in gangster films
- character relationships such as the male and female coming together in rom-coms despite all the odds against them
- visual iconographies (props, costumes, locations, settings, lighting) such as low-key lighting in horror films and settings such as haunted houses, grave yards and remote places
- ideology and themes such as gangster films suggesting that crime does not pay

Quentin Tarantino can be considered an auteur
(http://3.bp.blogspot.com/_YmvRDoZMb-k/TS-IEelwgXI/AAAAAAAAAL0/nEzQADM-7dE/s1600/quentin-tarantino-3-26-07.jpg)

Similarly, **auteur theory** looks for patterns in the films made by the same directors (who are seen as 'authors' of the films). This theory suggests that an author has a distinctive 'signature' that is evident across their body of work. For example, Quentin Tarantino's signature could be said to be sharp dialogue and violence whereas Martin Scorsese's trademark tends to be themes of masculinity and repression.

Case Study: True Grit (2010) Directed by the Coen Brothers

Structuralism can be seen as a collection of theories which all attempt to identify the structure or building blocks of a particular text. One way of using structuralist theory is to apply the various individual ideas to a single text. The following example uses *True Grit* (2010) and applies the following ideas:

- genre
- auteur theory
- Todorov's narrative structure
- Propp's character functions
- Barthes' action, enigma and symbolic codes

(http://www.filmofilia.com/true-grit-review-30437/)

Theory	Application to *True Grit*	
Genre	*True Grit* is a western, which is evident from its **generic conventions** and **iconography** such as **costumes** (cowboy hats, cowboy boots, leather chaps, holsters for guns, long coats), **props** (guns, rifles, horses), **settings** (wide open spaces, saloons, dusty towns) and **themes** (retribution, revenge, man versus nature, lawmakers versus villains).	
Auteur theory	The Coen brothers, Ethan and Joel, have made numerous films together, including: *Blood Simple* **(1984),** *Fargo* **(1996),** *The Big Lebowski* **(1998),** *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* **(2000),** *No Country for Old Men* **(2007)** and *A Serious Man* **(2009)**. Common elements across these films include characters on the edge, unusual and eccentric characters, wide open spaces and black humour. From these and other elements, audience members familiar with the directors' previous works will be aware that they are watching a Coen Brothers' film.	
Todorov's narrative structures	The film appears to open in a state of disequilibrium as there has been a murder but, in the film world, this is actually **equilibrium** as it is shown to be a relatively normal occurrence. The film world is one where lawmen struggle to keep the law and, in *True Grit*, this is evident at the beginning as fourteen year old Mattie Ross' father has been killed by a law breaker, Tom Chaney. **Disruption** comes when Mattie hires Rooster Cogburn, a one-eyed, trigger-happy US Marshall, to capture Chaney. This sets up the **disequilibrium** and takes Rooster and Mattie on a quest. **Action** comes in the form of the chase to capture Chaney. **Resolution** comes when Mattie must kill Chaney or be killed herself and the **new equilibrium** is set up when Mattie is has avenged her father and can then get on with her life.	
Propp's character functions	Like many modern narratives, this theory is somewhat difficult to apply to *True Grit* because the characters do not have the traditional functions you might expect. It could be argued that the **Hero** status is as much applicable to Mattie Ross as it is to Rooster Cogburn and, whilst Mattie is not a traditional **Princess**, she has some qualities of the **Princess** and is ultimately rescued by Cogburn. Tom Chaney is a straightforward **Villain** and Ranger La Boeuf is the **Donor.** The **Helper**, in this case, could be seen as Little Blackie, Mattie's horse who runs his heart out, literally, to save her life. These are very much open to interpretation and alternative reading of the characters could be made.	
Barthes' codes	action codes	The narrative is regularly punctuated by gun fights, hangings, chases and fist fights.
	enigma codes	The audience may have questions revolving around the search for Tom Chaney and the clues to finding him
	symbolic codes	The film makes regular use of binary oppositions such as lawmen / outlaws, young / old, male / female, civilisation / wilderness.

Exam Hint:- *When using structuralism in the exam it is important to understand that it will be the quality of your analysis that will earn good marks, not your general knowledge of the theory. For example, listing the elements of Propp's character functions will not earn you marks unless you can apply the character types to your chosen text **and** explain how this is relevant to your overall analysis of the text.*

Structuralism in trouble?

Structuralism was a very popular way of analysing media texts but, by the 1970s, it underwent a transformation as the individual parts were so diverse that it was difficult to identify a coherent theory. In response to this, new ways of analysing texts developed, including: **semiotics, deconstruction** and **post-structuralism.**

Post-structuralism

In order to understand post-structuralism, it is essential to use structuralism as a point of comparison. Whereas structuralism is interested in the 'internal' structures of the text itself, post-structuralism is interested in how 'external' structures can affect meaning. For example, post-structural analysis may look at how attitudes towards gender or ethnicity in society affect the audience's understanding of a text and the meanings it generates. Thus, the focus shifts from text to reader (or audience). Post-structuralism challenges a good deal of the arguments that were posited within structuralism, particularly the notion that a media text has a single and identifiable meaning. Within this perspective, the idea of 'auteur' or author is played down, as is any fixed meaning within a text. In its place, post-structuralism emphasises the range of different meanings and interpretations within a text that audiences can create. When **Roland Barthes** wrote *Death of the Author,* he saw it as unimportant what the author intended within a text, what was more important was the audience's interpretation of the text. Post-structuralism challenges the idea that it is possible to identify clear structures in texts and places emphasis on the arbitrary relationship between signifiers and signified (signs shown and the meanings they create). Within this theory, media texts contain 'floating' signifiers that can be interpreted in different ways by different audience members.

Case Study: OK! Magazine Issue 766, March 8th 2011

When analysing a magazine cover, post-structuralists would ask whether the meanings of the various signifiers (such as the colours used, the images and fonts) were all fixed in meaning or whether they are **polysemic** (having many meanings) and open to interpretation by different audiences. The audience for the text is not a homogenous mass, rather it is comprised of individuals of various ages, genders, ethnicities and social classes. Even though texts such as *OK*! magazine have target audiences, even then it is unlikely that people who share an age group, gender, social class and ethnicity would all understand and respond to the text in the same way. For example, some women may see Katie Price in this image as looking attractive and aspire to look like her whilst other women may feel she is unattractive and unappealing. These differences in interpretation are likely to be even more pronounced when there are differences in age or social class between audience members. As a result, there are limitless ways to interpret this cover, depending on a huge range of factors.

(http://pomwonderful.co.uk/news/138/)

Activity

Complete a post-structural analysis of this magazine cover by considering how each type of person would interpret the text.

Type of audience member	Possible interpretation
Working-class, teenage girl	
Middle-class teenage boy	
40 year old mother	
70 year old man	

(http://www.disneydreaming.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/Justin-Bieber-Teen-Vogue-Cover.jpg)

Exam Hint:- *Make sure you have carried out your own analysis on recent media texts rather than using examples from books or the internet. This will show the examiner that, not only do you know the theory, but you also understand it well enough to be able to apply it to a new text.*