media

HEINEMANN

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THIRD EDITION

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Contents

How to use this book

1 Representation

2 Media and change

3 Investigating narrative

4 Media forms and narratives in production

5 Australian stories

6 Narrative and ideology

7 Media production

8 Agency and control

Film noir and neo noir

FILM NOIR

NEO NOIR

CHARACTERISTICS OF FILM NOIR AND NEO NOIR

Setting

Plot and themes

Character

3.1 Narratives

NARRATIVE AND STORY

NARRATIVE ESSENTIALS

AUDIENCE

SELF-REFLEXIVE FILM

Examples of student work

Samples from former VCE Media students' production design plans serve as a guide for current students as they work to produce their media product.

Learning activities

Can be used as homework tasks or to facilitate classroom discussion

Chapter summary

Provides an overview of the chapter in clear, succinct dot points

Assessment tasks

Present opportunities for further research and skills development

Glossary

A comprehensive list of media words and terms. Each explanation is written in easy-to-understand language.

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Each student book comes with Reader+
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- Case studies that describe and encourage in-depth investigation of media texts and topics
- End-of-chapter summaries, assessment tasks and exam preparation
- A glossary and an index for ready reference
- Written by an experienced author team, who are all practising teachers:
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    - Kevin Tibaldi, Board member, ATOM
    - Robert Young, Education Officer, ATOM

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THIRD EDITION

1 Representation

The idea that reality is constructed and represented is one of the core concepts in media. All media practitioners work to portray or 're-present' a particular version of a reality—for instance, filmmakers begin by consciously thinking about ways they can represent events, characters and ideas on film. Similarly, photographers deliberately decide what to represent and what techniques they will use to do so. Even media texts that claim to show reality, such as documentaries and news, begin with a process of selection and construction and finish with a process of construction.

This chapter discusses the ways in which media products, messages and meanings are constructed and created through this process of selection, omission, construction and representation. The chapter also explores how meaning and media products are received and understood by audiences through the processes of selection, interpretation and interaction.

The Treachery of Images by René Magritte, oil on canvas, 1928–29. Magritte is saying that in the arts in general and in the media in particular, what is presented as reality is not reality itself.

Representing reality

Media practitioners work to portray or 're-present' a particular version of a reality. The idea that reality is constructed and represented is one of the core concepts in media.

FIGURE 1.1.1 The media constructs and creates images. An Iraqi prisoner of war and marines from the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit in Iraq in 2003. Note how the original Associated Press image [far left] can be cropped so how we read the image changes.

MEDIA AND REALITY

The media attempts to create a believable version of reality—if it was not believable, you would not accept it. The media relies on what has been termed your 'willing suspension of disbelief'. You know it is a film or a television show but you 'go along' with the illusion—if you did not, you would not get any enjoyment from it. This seems obvious when you are talking about fictional texts, but the creation and construction of a reality happens just as much in non-fiction texts such as news and documentaries. It is just that in these latter cases the construction is concealed more by both the creator and the viewer/reader, as illustrated in Figure 1.1.1.

Figure 1.1.1 from the Iraq War in 2003 illustrates how reality can be constructed through selection and omission. In the first and original image, marines from the 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit are seen offering an Iraqi prisoner of war a canteen. The next image is cropped to show the gun only. The last image is cropped to show the canteen only.

Learning activities

1   Look at René Magritte's painting on page 1.
    a   Describe what you see.
    b   The text in the image, 'Ceci n'est pas une pipe' means 'This is not a pipe'. If this is not a pipe, then what is it?

2   Look at the images contained in Figure 1.1.1.
    a   Describe what you think is happening.
    b   By covering different parts of the image (selection and omission), can you create different ways of reading this image?
    c   What implications can you see when images are manipulated like this?

CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY AND SELF

One of the ways the media (and you) can construct a reality is via the process of representation. That is, the media (and you) represent a construction as though it was the original and authentic. These representations can be a variety of different things. They can depict:

- individuals (these can be human or animated characters in narratives, or political and historical figures or celebrities)
- social groupings (such as families, genders, age or ethnic groups)
- institutions (such as the law)
- ideas (such as freedom or equality)
- events (such as wars)
- issues (such as climate change and the environment, or terrorism).

IDENTITY AND CONTEXT

The construction of identity can change with context. If you were constructing an identity for yourself, the way you went about it would be influenced by both:

- the medium, the form it would take; for example, a typed resume or a social media profile
- the audience; for example, a parent, an employer, friends or social peers.

Learning activities

1 Write down in a few sentences what 'identity' means to you. In this case, look at identity as: you as an individual; you as part of a group such as a your family, school or class; or how you identify yourself in the broadest sense, such as with respect to gender, ethnicity or something else entirely.

2 Using your work from Question 1, choose or create a series of images illustrating your ideas about identity. You can create the images yourself, through drawing or photography, or collect them from existing sources.

3 Why did you choose these images? What were you trying to communicate?

4 Show your images to the class.

5 Create a series of brief identities for yourself for each of the following and include an image:
   - a video game
   - a social media site
   - a job application
   - a dating site
   - a fan-based webpage
   - a school newsletter.

6 How has the context changed the identities you have created?

7 Read out an identity to the class and see if they can pick which context you have based the identity on.
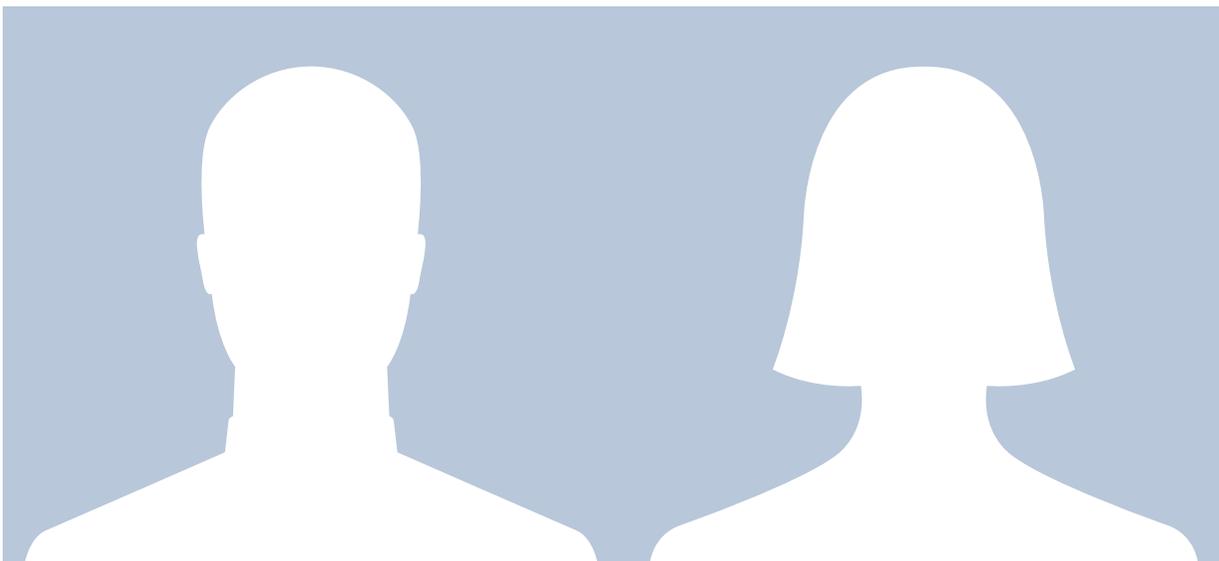
FIGURE 1.1.2 No-photo icons

CONSTRUCTING REPRESENTATIONS

The images from the films *Australian Rules* (2002) and *Mean Girls* (2004) shown in Figures 1.1.3 and 1.1.4 have been constructed. This construction takes place through camera framing, location, choice of actors, costume, lighting, location and other tools. The constructions or representations in *Mean Girls* and *Australian Rules* are of specific groups in society—teenagers, or two specific groups of teenage boys and teenage girls. These representations are not random, but carefully selected and constructed by the filmmakers. These constructions give the audience clues and cues on interpreting the images. At its most obvious, in the case of *Mean Girls*, the dominant colour in the image is pink, which, in Western culture is generally seen as a girls' colour. Therefore, you can see that these constructions are mediated (influenced) by a number of things including the maker, the viewer and the society or culture that the work was produced in.

FIGURES 1.1.3 AND 1.1.4 *Australian Rules* (2002) [above] and *Mean Girls* (2004) [below]. These images show representations of teenagers from different times and places.

Learning activities

1 Look at Figures 1.1.3 and 1.1.4.
   a What effect does the choice of actors, costumes, camera framing, composition and lighting have on the representations?
   b Do you think gender has been constructed in different ways in these images?
   c Why do you think this? Provide examples from the images that support your case.

2 Compare your answers with others in your class.
   a Are there any differences in interpretation? Explain.
   b How do you account for these differences?

CONSTRUCTING MEANING

To understand the construction of media realities, you need to look at how the viewer/reader or participant makes sense of, reads, understands or constructs the meaning and 'reality' of the text.

> The term 'text' in media and cultural studies has a wider meaning. It is best described as the artefact or 'thing' being examined. It can be a film, magazine, video game, photograph or any media product.

An image does not have a meaning in and of itself—there is no inherent meaning that lies within it waiting to be uncovered.

The audience plays an essential role in the creation of meaning in a text. Audiences interpret or read a representation based on a variety of factors, such as their previous experiences with similar images, how their society or culture generally reads these images, and even the language they use to describe or interact with the images.

It is generally acknowledged that people read and interpret images and, in fact, media products in general via the language of their culture. People give meaning to things with words. If an object could not be named or described in words, then it would be very difficult to communicate it to someone else. Communication is one of the core elements of representation in the media, which exists to communicate ideas. Ideas are coded within representations and the decoding starts to occur at one of the most basic levels of language—words. If this is the case, then an examination of how words work to create meaning and how this meaning becomes attached to representations is needed.

> Roland Barthes was a leading French literary theorist and philosopher in the twentieth century. He questioned how much one could understand the written word in relation to speech.

DENOTATION AND CONNOTATION

Roland Barthes, among other influential thinkers, argued that meaning was attached to a representation via the process of language and that the meaning of words is derived from a process of denotation and connotation. At its simplest, this process starts with denotation—attaching a name and a definition to an object. For example, a simple metal object that is triangular in shape with a sharp edge and wooden handle is given the name 'knife' (denotation).

However, the word 'knife' is not neutral. By the process of connotation, a number of meanings can be attached to the word 'knife', which may be as varied as cooking, food and adventure, or murder, blood and violence.

Meaning

↑

Word (connotation)

↑

Object (denotation)
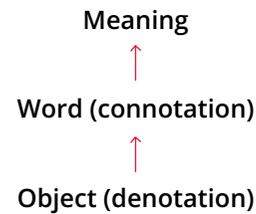
FIGURE 1.1.5 How meaning is created

MEANING: CULTURE AND CONTEXT

Meaning attaches to a representation in a number of ways. Two of the most significant are through the cultures the meaning has been created and viewed in, and the context in which it is read. The role of context can completely change the way an image is read. Take the example of the knife. A knife lying on the floor with blood and broken glass around it will be given a different meaning to a knife placed next to a plate and cake with candles on it. These readings, however, are also culturally based. The knife and candle would be read very differently in a culture that did not bake cakes nor celebrate birthdays like Western cultures do.
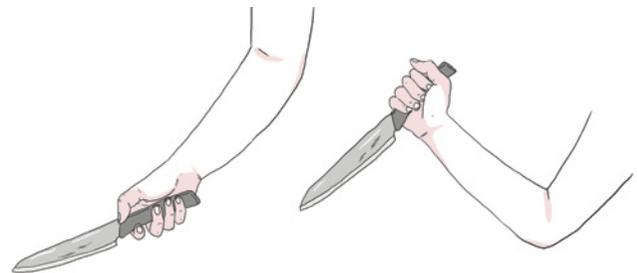
FIGURE 1.1.6 These illustrations reveal how meanings attached to a 'knife' can be altered in subtle ways.

SYMBOLIC CODES

Meaning is also attached to images through references to, and within, culture or society. Barthes also talks of a third level of meaning: when the object can function as a 'myth maker'. By this he meant that the meaning could be an abstract idea that might be difficult or lengthy to explain, but is clear in the society in which it is viewed. In the case of the knife, an abstract idea may be happiness (for a birthday cake) or fear (for a murder). In this way, connotation and denotation can create emotion through meaning (see Figure 1.1.6).

COLOUR CODES

The important thing to remember is that these meanings are specific to the society or culture in which they are viewed. Colours, for instance, hold different meanings in different countries. In Australia, gold is generally associated with wealth and green is related to jealousy. In Western society, red is seen as the colour of love and sexuality. In China, Thailand and many Buddhist countries, red is considered a lucky colour and is worn at weddings. In Western countries, black is the colour of death, but in China the colour of mourning is white. Cultural meanings can also change within a society over time. In Australia, green is now connected to the environment and the environmental protection movement—a meaning that did not exist twenty-five years ago.

CULTURAL CODES

Meaning is attached via what Barthes called a 'cultural code'—that is, knowledge drawn and gained from living in, absorbing and consuming other products of a culture. Imagine this scene: it is the end of the film and the young couple have finally overcome all obstacles placed in their way and are together. The camera lingers on them as they embrace on the deck of the ship that is going to take them away to their new life. They move offscreen as the camera reveals a life buoy with the ship's name on it: *SS Titanic*. Whether this is a happy ending or not depends on your cultural code knowledge. If it tells you that Figure 1.1.7 comes from the film *Titanic* (1997) and that the *Titanic* was a ship that sank, killing most on board, you read this image as tragic and know that there is a tragic ending. If you do not know that the *Titanic* sank, then this is simply a classic ending to a romance.

FIGURE 1.1.7 *Titanic* (1997). Cultural code knowledge means audiences can read this image differently.

Learning activities

1 Write down three things that come to your mind when you see the word 'knife'.

2 Compare your answers with others in the class.

3 What connotations could you apply to each image of a knife in Figure 1.1.6? Draw one more frame for each image that could once again change the meaning.

4 You see a knife rack on a kitchen wall. All the knives are there, except the biggest carving knife. Write the meaning you attach to the face of the missing knife if:

   a it is daytime and sunlight is flooding into the kitchen where food is bubbling in a pot

   b it is night-time and the kitchen is enveloped in darkness. You can only see the knife rack by a flash of lightning, and the only sound is a door banging in the wind.

5 Now think of two other objects and show how the meaning attached to them can also change with the context they are viewed in.

	NAME OF OBJECT	CONTEXT 1	CONTEXT 2
1			
2			

6 Write the meanings you generally associate with the following colours: red, pink, brown, yellow, blue, gold, black, white, grey and cream. (There may be more than one meaning.)

7 Share your colour meanings with the class. Does everyone agree on the same meanings?

CODES AND CONVENTIONS

Codes and conventions are some of the building blocks of media language and are very important in the construction of representations. Like language they involve elements that create an organised system of order and construction.

Codes and conventions work, in large part, due to audience familiarity and expectations and, as we have seen, can be culturally based. Many of the visual codes people are familiar with from film and television have become a kind of universal language.

SILENT FILMS

The Cabinet of Dr Caligari (1920) and *The Idle Class* (1921), shown in Figures 1.1.8 and 1.1.9, illustrate the codes within early silent movies that became a kind of universal language that could be read in similar ways by diverse audiences around the world, no matter which language they spoke.

There is not a great deal of difference between a code and a convention when talking about representation. Generally, a code is considered to be more like a rule, similar to grammar, whereas a convention is usually an established practice. A code is often the process by which people have learnt the language of the medium. For example, audiences have learnt that when a film cuts from one scene to another, time has passed. A convention may be a symbolic or a story element, such as that the bad guys lose or that a television news broadcast starts with a major story, and is then followed by national news, state news, sport, the weather and then perhaps a good news story. Similarly, a convention in print might be that a magazine begins with a front cover, some advertisements and a title page and ends with a short article or column before the last page, which is often an advertisement.

FIGURE 1.1.8 *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1920)

FIGURE 1.1.9 *The Idle Class* (1921)

Learning activity

1 Look at Figures 1.1.8 and 1.1.9.
   a What do you think is happening in each image?
   b What do you think happened just before and what will happen just after?
   c Compare your answers with other class members. Was there a generally agreed reading?

VISUAL CODES IN ACTION

From the example of shots shown in Figure 1.1.10, the viewer can see how images are coded. The images/codes are made up of a combination of elements that, when combined, have meanings attached to them.

- Shot 1: The frame is little more than a shot of a person with a minimal amount of information attached to it.

- Shot 2: If the camera angle is changed to show the shot at a low angle, not only is the image a bit more interesting, but the viewer can begin to develop some assumptions about the person in the shot. Consider what a low-angled shot might mean in this context.

- Shot 3: In this shot, the lighting has been altered. The lighting has been directed from behind the person so that now he has been silhouetted. Consider what you think this combination of back lighting and camera angle might mean.

- Shot 4: In this shot, the person now has an object in his hand; that is, he now has a prop. The inclusion of the prop can alter and/or enhance the image's meaning.

- Shot 5: The person has raised the arm holding the object above shoulder height. There is now an element of performance included in this shot.

READING REALITY

Images like the 'axeman' in Shots 4 and 5 in Figure 1.1.10 can usually be quite simply read, but different audiences can read other images in very different ways. This idea of audiences and their role in reading codes, conventions and cultural references is vital to understanding how codes and conventions operate within media texts and within the cultures that produce the texts. For codes and conventions to convey meaning there has to be a general agreement among the audience about their meaning—just as there is general agreement about the meaning of words among speakers of a language.

Cultural theorist Stuart Hall developed a theory about audiences and their understanding of a text. Hall's 'reception theory' is broken into three reading types:

1 dominant or preferred reading where the reader/viewer shares the coded meaning with the author and reads it in ways that the author may have intended or that is consistent with the dominant cultural and social values

2 negotiated reading where the reader/viewer generally shares the dominant reading, but brings to bear their own interests and influences

3 oppositional reading where the reader/viewer understands the dominant reading and codes but rejects them and views the text from a different position. An example of this might be a feminist watching a Miss Universe pageant or a Green voter watching a Liberal Party advertisement.

The Italian writer and philosopher Umberto Eco also talked of an 'aberrant' reading, where a totally idiosyncratic reading is made that often has little grounding in a shared reality.
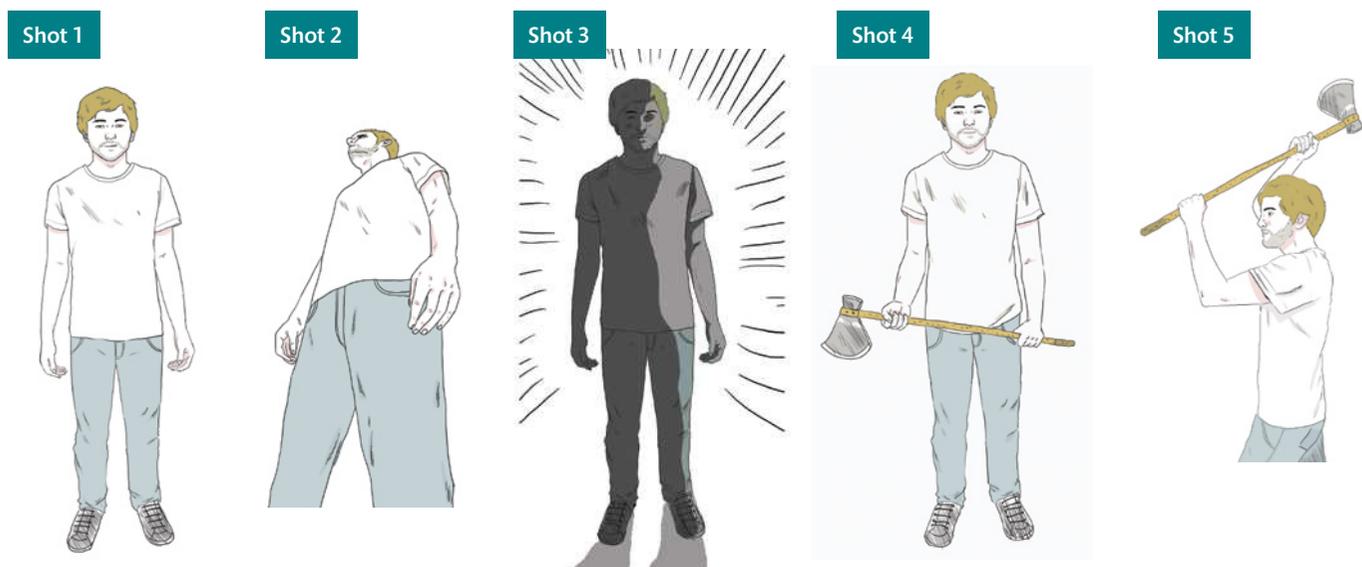
FIGURE 1.1.10 A storyboard showing how images are coded

For example, the song 'Helter Skelter' by The Beatles can be 'read' by an audience in different ways:

- dominant reading: could be, as the songwriter Paul McCartney said, just a wild rock song about a children's ride in an amusement park
- negotiated reading: could accept the dominant reading but also see the song as being about love and its wild ride
- oppositional reading: could be asking how rock stars know what love and life is about when they live in an artificial and isolated world
- aberrant reading: could be the way cult leader Charles Manson read the song—as a call to murder people and to start a racial war through random killings.

CODES AND CONVENTIONS IN ACTION

While audiences may interpret codes differently, they also tend to read them in similar ways. Some people's reading of codes is so ingrained that it just seems the 'natural' way to do it. For example, at a basic level, audiences most often read a film's fade in as a cue that time has passed or, when an object is zoomed in on, they know to attach importance to it.

VISUAL AND AUDIO CODES

Broadly speaking, codes can be divided into two main groups, visual and audio—these are in addition to the cultural codes mentioned earlier.

These are the codes associated with production elements or technical devices such as camera work, sound effects, lighting and so on. Some of the visual and audio codes audiences are familiar with are:

CODE	EFFECT OR MEANING
Low-angle camera, looking up	Character appears powerful
High-angle camera, looking down	Character appears vulnerable
Lighting is low with many shadows	Mystery
Fade to black	Time has passed
Cut to and cut back	There is simultaneous action that is the audience is seeing two things that are happening at the same time
Music builds	Tension is increasing

Learning activity

Create your own story around Shot 5 and include four other shots.

| SHOT 1 | SHOT 2 | SHOT 3 | SHOT 4 | SHOT 5 |

You can carry out this exercise in a variety of ways:
- Use a digital camera to capture the images.
- Sketch the images by hand.
- Select someone in the class to perform to your directions, using the boundaries of the whiteboard as your frame.

GRAPHIC NOVELS

Codes and conventions from one medium can be seen or used in other forms. For example, film codes have become part of the visual language of graphic novels, as seen in Figures 1.1.11 and 1.1.12.

FIGURE 1.1.11 *Runaways: Pride and Joy*, Vol. 1, Marvel Comics, 2004

FIGURE 1.1.12 *Spider-Man*, No. 12, Marvel Comics, 2017

Learning activities

1 Look at Figure 1.1.11.
   a Write down all the visual codes that you can see.
   b What effect might these have on an audience?
   c What might you expect to happen next?

2 Write down at least three audio codes such as music, voice or sound effects that you think would fit the image. Explain why you have chosen each one and the intended effect on the audience.

3 Look at Figure 1.1.12.
   a What are some of the codes and conventions from graphic novels that you can see? For example, what direction/order are the frames being read in?
   b What are some of the codes and conventions from film and television that you can see?
   c What effect do you think the combining of these codes and conventions has?

NARRATIVE CONVENTIONS

Narrative conventions are some of the ways a story is organised and portrayed. Audience expectations when approaching a story are, to some extent, shaped by familiarity with the codes and conventions of storytelling. Genre expectations also shape the way an audience approaches a media product, how the story will unfold and how it will end.

The codes and conventions of television news is a good example. During a broadcast, the audience expects to be approached by a newsreader (an authoritative figure) who will introduce the items and reporters 'on the scene'. Viewers also expect the stories to be presented in a certain order (e.g. important, national, local, international, sport, weather, novelty) and that they will contain interviews and opposing viewpoints. These conventions are so familiar that, to the audience, they define a news bulletin, and seem to be the 'natural' or 'normal' way of delivering the news. The viewer does not tend to see news bulletins as a particular construction that may have other values at play.

Learning activities

1 Watch the news on television tonight. The conventions are so strong that it does not matter which one. Write down all the codes and conventions you can see. They may be technical as well narrative. Compare your responses with others in your class.

2 Fill in the following table using your knowledge of genre narrative codes.

GENRE	MAIN CHARACTERS	SETTING	STORY	ENDING
War				
Romantic comedy				
Teen comedy				
Space				

1.2 Representations and values

The media is not neutral—its values influence the representations that are constructed.

REPRESENTATIONS

The representations that are a vital part of the media's construction of reality are not neutral—there are a variety of values that are embedded in them. Some of these are obvious and others are deep-seated and concealed by what we consider to be 'normal' or 'natural'. An image, a film, an advertisement or other media artefact is a product of the society and so it will contain the values of that society. These values can range from what the society considers proper, such as all children should go to school, to values that a society holds to be important or essential, such as killing is wrong.

The values that the viewer or audience brings to the interpretation of the representation are important, but a reading can be directed by a variety of influences that can include:

- prior knowledge
- cultural understandings
- personal opinions or biases
- the text itself and the context that surrounds the representation or construction.

MEDIA INFLUENCE AND REPRESENTATION

Figures 1.2.1 and 1.2.2 show how the captions that may accompany news images can and do influence the reading of an image. The captions that accompanied the news images from Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans tell a great deal about values in America, particularly regarding race relations and how media outlets commonly represent African Americans and Americans of European heritage. The captions also reference values regarding youth and maleness, particularly when attached to race.

> Hurricane Katrina was one of the worst storms to hit the USA. It devastated the city of New Orleans—a city with a population that was more than 60 per cent African American. The 280 kilometre per hour winds caused massive destruction, a storm surge caused the levees and floodwalls protecting low-lying areas to fail and 80 per cent of the city was flooded. The areas where the majority of African Americans lived were the hardest hit. Nearly 2000 people died as a result of the hurricane and tens of thousands of people became homeless. Many people blamed the government for taking too long to send aid to the city and argued that the overreaction of the authorities, such as the police, sparked claims of racism.

FIGURE 1.2.1 Caption from US media source: 'A young man walks through chest-deep flood water after looting a grocery store in New Orleans.'

FIGURE 1.2.2 Caption from US media source: 'Residents wade through chest-deep water after finding bread and soda from a local grocery store after Hurricane Katrina.'

FIGURE 1.2.3 A man waves a US flag among other Hurricane Katrina victims as the clean-up effort continues in the wake of the devastation created by the hurricane that swept through New Orleans on 29 August 2005.

FIGURE 1.2.4 *A.D. New Orleans after the Deluge*, Pantheon Books, 2010

VALUES AND CONSTRUCTION

Figures 1.2.3 and 1.2.4 show two views after hurricane Katrina, and how the same event can be seen differently. The images show how construction can have different values attached to it.

Learning activities

1   Describe the ways in which your reading of a representation may be influenced or directed.

2   Look at Figures 1.2.3 and 1.2.4. What attitude or values to hurricane Katrina and the authorities do you think each image is portraying?

3   Find an image from a newspaper, news magazine or news website.

   a   Keep the original caption, but write another believable caption.

   b   Share your image with your class and see who can pick the original caption.

ANALYSING REPRESENTATIONS IN THE SOCIAL CONTEXT

As a media student, there are some key questions you need to ask yourself when you look at how media representations operate in a social context:

- What is being represented?

- How is it being represented?

- Who made or produced the representation?

- When was it made? How does it fit with other images of the time? How did events of the time shape the representation?

- Why is this being represented and why is it being represented in this way?

- What is being emphasised and what is being left out?

- What do you understand by the representation? Would others have the same understanding?

- What alternative representations have you seen? What is the difference between the two?

REPRESENTING 'OTHER' AND POSTCOLONIALISM

Representations can reveal a great deal of information about the attitudes and values of the society that produced them:

- what a society values

- what it respects

- what it fears.

This is particularly the case when examining representations of other cultures and ethnicities. Representations of ethnicity include racial, ethnic and linguistic groups.

Colonialism in this study is taken to mean the expansion of Europe and European nations into other continents to extend their power and authority. The sophisticated technologies of weapons, transport and communications enabled Europe to conquer peoples in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, the Americas and the Pacific. Colonialism reached its peak in the late nineteenth century and began to decline after the Second World War when, after fighting for freedom in Europe, many of the European colonies began demanding freedom and independence.

Part of this struggle for freedom and independence was an increased recognition of how colonisation had worked on a cultural level and an examination of the role played by representations created by the colonising powers. These myths included the idea that Europeans were superior in all fields including the cultural and were coupled with a consistent portrayal of the colonised as the outsiders or as 'other'.

POSTCOLONIALISM

Postcolonialism, the study of the cultural aftermath of colonial rule, explores the effects on a society after it has experienced a period of foreign control. It became a prominent area of study in the latter half of the twentieth century, when previously colonised countries and peoples had gained or were fighting for independence. Postcolonialism contributed to an increased recognition of how colonisation worked on a cultural level and the role played by representations in creating the myths Barthes talked about.

Palestinian American literary theorist Edward Said argued that, almost from its earliest beginnings, Europe had culturally defined itself at the centre. This then placed all others as outsiders—even terms such as 'The East' defined other cultures by their relationship to Europe as the central point.

> The geographical region known as the Middle East was named as such because it is situated between Europe and what was known as the Far East, now known more commonly as Asia.

Said argued that Europe defined:

- itself as rational, forward moving, progressive, free, safe, scientific, educated and civilised

- outsiders, the East, as the opposite: dangerous, backward, irrational, ignorant and inferior.

Said pointed out that these attitudes and values could be seen in the images Europeans used to represent both themselves and the colonised.

COLONIAL REPRESENTATIONS

Figure 1.2.5, an 1896 advertisement for Camp Tea, is a representation of European settlers' opinions of themselves as part of a European colonising power and reflects their attitudes towards Australia's Indigenous inhabitants. Meanwhile, in a typical colonial representation from *Tintin in the Congo*, shown in Figure 1.2.6, Europeans (and even their animals) are portrayed as educated and powerful figures who deserve total respect, if not adoration.

Learning activities

1 Look carefully at Figure 1.2.5, the ad for Camp Tea.
   a Describe:
   - who is in the image
   - what they are doing (What positions do they hold in the frame of the image?)
   - what they are wearing
   - what their possessions are
   - the relationship they may have to each other and to the country.
   b Do you see any evidence of some of Said's arguments in this representation? What conclusions can you draw?

2 Look at Figure 1.2.6, the image from *Tintin in the Congo*.
   a What evidence can you find of European superiority?
   b Do you think there are any exaggerated physical features? Explain.
   c What might the effect of these be?
   d Do you see any evidence of some of Said's arguments in this representation?
   e The Tintin books are aimed at children. How may illustrations such as this influence the way children see Africa?
   f What conclusions can you draw?
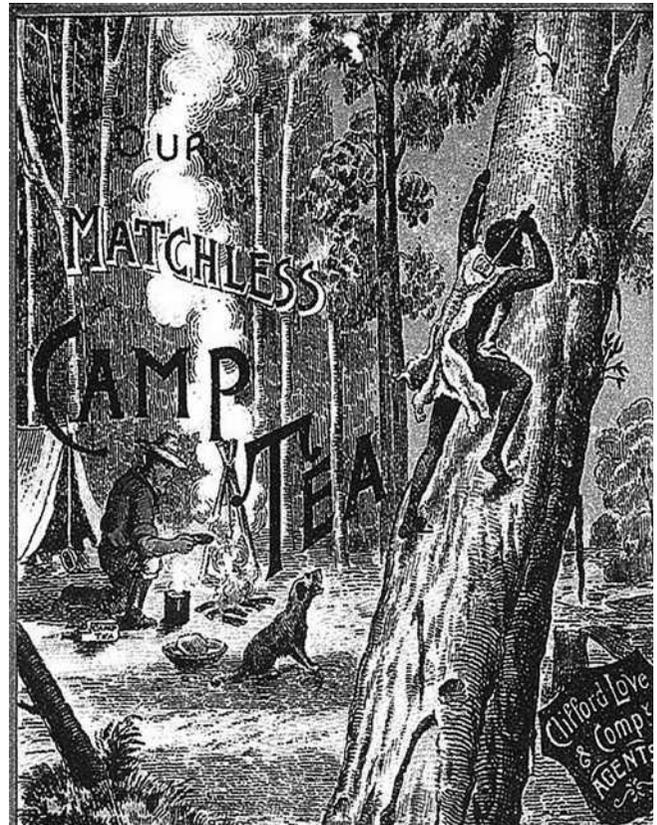
FIGURE 1.2.5 Camp Tea, Australian advertisement, 1896
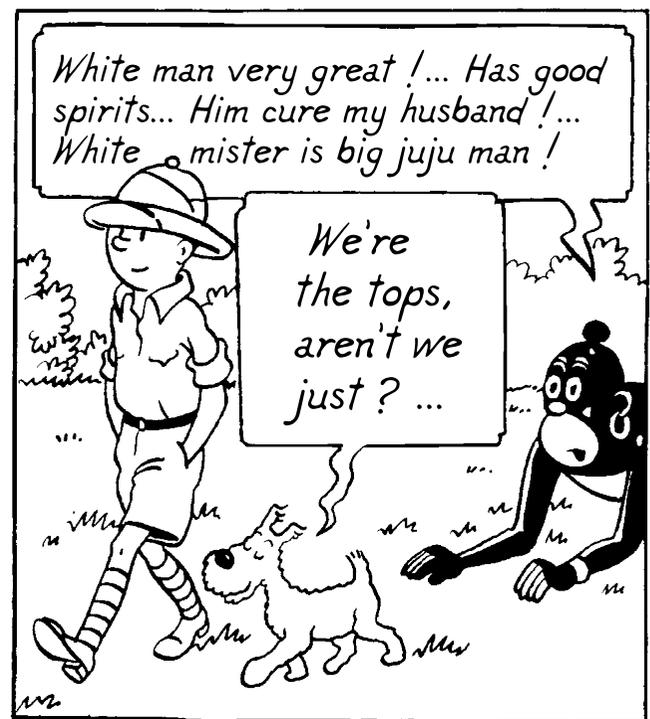
FIGURE 1.2.6 *Tintin in the Congo*, 1931, revised 1946

Representations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

In Australia, representations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People have changed over time. These changes can be seen in an advertisement from the 1920s (Figures 1.2.7); *Dead Heart* (1996), a film that looks at the divide between non–Indigenous Australian values and Indigenous culture (Figure 1.2.8); and *The Sapphires* (2012), a film about four Indigenous women who form a band and travel to Vietnam to sing for the Australian troops during the Vietnam war (Figure 1.2.9).

FIGURE 1.2.8 Dead Heart (1996)

FIGURE 1.2.7 A 1920s Australian advertisement for soap

Learning activity

Look at Figures 1.2.7, 1.2.8 and 1.2.9. How do you think representations of Indigenous Australians have changed over the years? Include any other representations of Indigenous Australians that you like.

Note: Use the analysing representations focus questions to help you form a response.

FIGURE 1.2.9 The Sapphires (2012)

THE EXOTIC, THE DANGEROUS, THE HUMOROUS AND THE PITIED

Many media theorists argue that while the representations of ethnicity may change over time, they usually still function in the same way in order to perpetuate the stereotypes, myths and values societies hold towards the 'other'.

Alverado *et al*. in *Learning the Media* (1987) have grouped representations of ethnicity into four categories: 'the exotic', 'the dangerous', 'the humorous' and 'the pitied'. Some of these groupings serve to remove what may be seen as a 'threat', while other groupings emphasise it. Remember, the composition of these groups is not fixed and will change over time. It is also important to remember that these representations come from the dominant culture—not all groups in society see the representations in the same way.

The exotic is a representation that the dominant society uses to group people who are seen as different, exciting, mysterious, strange or glamorous, but still as outsiders or 'other'. This representation can often be used about a place or time, as well as a group of people.

FIGURE 1.2.10 'Exotic' Greek culture in the USA in *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* (2002)

The dangerous is a representation that tends to be prominent in news, current affairs or narrative texts. They are generally represented as a threat to the dominant culture or 'way of life' that needs to be dealt with. The types of people who are considered dangerous often changes over time, from place to place and culture to culture.

The humorous is a representation often found in situation comedies and advertising. It generally relies on stereotyping, or characterising an individual or a group according to a conventional idea or concept. Often, it is hard to criticise representations that claim to be humorous when someone argues that they are 'just a bit of harmless fun'. This representation often functions to mock and humiliate those that the dominant society sees as a minor threat. It also serves to keep the group in their position as 'outsiders', who are to be laughed at, not with. The humorous representation may change with time and place.

The pitied is a representation often used by Western nations atoning for the damage they have caused through colonisation, economic exploitation or war. The pitied may be represented as the victims of famine and war. Usually, the causes of these famines or wars are not examined so as to avoid directly engaging with the actions of the Western nations. Representations of the pitied often go hand in hand with connotations of primitiveness, backwardness or underdevelopment, where again, the causes are not explored. There can be a fine line between the pitied and the dangerous.

Learning activities

1 Provide an example that you have seen in the media of a representation from each of the exotic, the dangerous, the humorous and the pitied categories. You may choose from any media form such as television, advertising, film, print and online media.

2 Can you think of representations of people that have changed over time? What category did the group(s) belong to before and after the dominant culture's change in perception?

3 Find an example of one of these representations and write a short presentation for your class discussing it in light of your reading.

1.3 Representing gender

There have long been concerns about the way the media portrays gender, particularly with regard to gender roles and how the media portrays women.

REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN

Social and cultural theorists argue that the role and status of women in society has been continually evolving, yet this is not always accurately reflected in many media representations of them.

The media in general (and advertising in particular) has often been accused of perpetuating stereotypical gender roles. There is a general agreement that many media representations of woman fall into two categories—women as defined by their relationship with the home, their family and males, or women as defined by their bodies and sexuality.

Figures 1.3.1 and 1.3.2 illustrate the media representation of women in the traditional roles of home and body. The *Stepford Wives* films represent women as domestic housewives who are also physically attractive. Although the 2004 remake was supposed to be a parody (satire) of

the original film, all parodies must, by definition, reference actual representations to be recognised as humorous—the remake shows how representations of women in film have changed little.

FIGURES 1.3.1 AND 1.3.2 In the 2004 *Stepford Wives* remake [above] and in the 1975 [below] original, women are identified in their traditional role as homemakers.

GENDER AND THE MEDIA

Men tend to be defined by their jobs, occupations, sports and hobbies, as independent or as authority figures. They are usually portrayed as active. On the other hand, women tend to be defined by their relationships to men, they are portrayed as wife, girlfriend, lover, or they are defined by their relationship to their family as mother, daughter or carer. The women are usually seen as passive. The male domain is the outside world and work, while the female domain is the home and the domestic.

Gender representations are not confined to advertising. Films and television dramas also often contain these representations of women. It is difficult (but not impossible, for there are always differing representations and readings) to think of many examples in film or television productions where the ultimate authority or person in power is not male. Leading politicians and business managers have traditionally tended to be male, although if the business leader is female it is usually because the industry is seen as a feminine one, such as fashion.

The representation of a woman as a 'body', defined by her sexuality, is criticised on a number of levels for ignoring women's intellect, abilities and achievements, and reducing her to a bundle of physical attributes. This view of women has also been criticised for creating an idealised notion of beauty that is unrealistic or not attainable.

GENDER: POINT OF VIEW

An audience's reading of gender and roles can be influenced by the use of technical codes used to construct a representation. Point of view plays a large role in the way people read a text. Viewers tend to see women in media products from the male point of view. In a narrative, this occurs because the main character is usually male. The audience is being told the story through his eyes and it is through them that the audience assesses the other characters.

Audiences' reading of gender roles is also reinforced by the technical composition of the camera's point of view. Visually, this is achieved by directing the audience to look where the male is looking, then cutting to what he sees—the woman as a sexual object. Seeing from the male's point of view in this way is known as the 'male gaze'.

FIGURE 1.3.3 Honey Ryder (Ursula Andress) in *Dr No* (1962)

Learning activities

1 Look at the table of stereotypical gender characteristics below. Copy it and write at least six extra gender characteristics you have seen in the media.

'TYPICALLY' MALE	'TYPICALLY' FEMALE
Independent	Family
Hard	Nurturing
Lounge room	Kitchen

2 Identify which gender you think advertisers target to market the following products:

beer   small cars   large cars
shampoo   sports watches   computers.
department stores   investment advice

3 Give examples of the gender-targeted marketing that you have seen for these products and services. How do you think these advertisements work to perpetuate gender stereotypes?

The audience sees what he sees and identifies with him. This technical composition combined with the story element of point of view stitches the viewer into seeing the text from and identifying with the male character, and generally seeing the woman in one of the traditional roles of a body and/or subordinate. Figure 1.3.3 illustrates the idea of the male gaze. The camera shot before this image is of James Bond looking. The film then cuts to the shot of Honey Ryder, shown through his eyes. She is thus being defined by her body and sexuality.

WOMEN IN ADVERTISING

In advertising, women are typically represented in their traditional role of homemaker, and in relation to their body as in the ad shown in Figure 1.3.4.

It is estimated that women make up around 80–85 per cent of all purchasing decisions—including technology, cars, houses, pharmaceuticals, yet only around 14 per cent of creative directors of advertising agencies are women. This would explain research that shows 91 per cent of women saying that advertisers don't understand them, as well as nearly 60 per cent of women being unsatisfied by adds in the food sector. A sector where most of the purchasing decisions are made by women.

FIGURE 1.3.4 This magazine ad shows how women are often objectified in advertising.

4 What do you think is the 'ideal' physical representation of a woman in the media?

5 Look at a number of advertisements on television. Can you find any examples of the male gaze? Do you see any validity in the criticism of the male gaze in the media?

6 Examine ten television advertisements and ten print advertisements and draw the results up as a table. Comment on your findings. What do you think are the implications for both men and women?

	ADVERTISEMENT
MALE PRESENCE	
FEMALE PRESENCE	
OCCUPATION	
APPEARANCE	
RELATIONSHIP TO OTHERS	

7 Focus on one print advertisement and one television advertisement that contain representations of both males and females. How would these advertisements work if the gender roles were reversed?

Rewrite one of the television scripts with the gender roles reversed and read it to the class.

8 Look at Figure 1.3.4 and answer the following:

a Describe the people in the image.

b Describe the setting.

c What else can you see? Remember that a lack of something may be as significant as its presence.

d Who is doing what? What are the relationships between the people or objects?

e List the main colours in the image. What connotations are attached to them?

f Is there any text? What are the key words? What connotations are attached to the words?

g What seems to be the meaning? (What does the ad seem to be saying? What is implied if you buy this product?)

h What values seem to be being expressed in the message? (How could this ad be read in terms of representations of women and celebrity, for example?)

i What is your reading of this ad? Can you think of an alternate or oppositional reading of this ad?

1.4 Constructing reality

When audiences are viewing a media product such as a film or a television show, they are watching a construction of reality—not reality itself.

REALISM AND NATURALISM

When talking about media products, particularly film, television and video, many people use the terms 'realism' and 'naturalism' interchangeably, but there is a very real difference. Naturalism is when a narrative/media product complies with the laws of nature. At its most obvious, gravity operates and the people in the text cannot fly. Texts where people can fly or superheroes operate are called non-naturalistic. Realism, on the other hand, refers to when characters and the film's world appears 'real' and logical; that is, police can arrest people, sheriffs wear badges and the characters and plot stay true to the film's internal logic. So, it might be naturalistic for the detective to let the serial killer go free, but it wouldn't be realistic; that is, it does not make logical sense in the story unless we know there is a reason for her to let the killer go.

FIGURE 1.4.1 *Pierrot le Fou* (1965). The use of unconventional framing draws the viewers' attention to the construction of the representation.

FILM AND TELEVISION

> Cinema is not the reflection of reality, but the reality of that reflection.
>
> Jean-Luc Godard

When viewing a media product such as a film or a television show, the audience knows that what they are watching is not reality but a construction of a reality. Classical Hollywood filmmaking tries to conceal this construction and present itself as a window to what viewers see as filmic reality. The codes and conventions of the classical Hollywood mode of production reinforce this reality. The camera is generally set at about a viewer's eye line and the most common shot is the 'plain américain' or mid shot, from the knees up. This shot tends to mimic how the human eyes work and gaze. The editing is generally seamless and shots are not jarring. The shots flow in a conventional way that is referred to as 'continuity editing', which viewers have become accustomed to as a reflection of reality.

However, this is not the way all films and television narratives operate. Filmmakers in the 1960s such as Jean-Luc Godard would use unconventional framing and other stylistic devices that continually drew the viewers' attention to the construction of the representation (as seen in Figure 1.4.1). Filmmakers would also jar viewers with actors addressing the camera, perhaps commenting on the film they were in. This particular technique is referred to as 'breaking the fourth wall' and is often seen now in television comedy.

> 'Breaking the fourth wall' is the term used to describe how a character breaks from the action in the scene and directly addresses the audience. The fourth wall is the imaginary barrier that separates the fictional onscreen world from the actual world of the audience. The phrase originated in the theatre.

FIGURE 1.4.2 *Django Unchained* (2012) is a mix of genres, history and fiction that construct a believable reality.

FORMS: FILM AND TELEVISION

There is a long tradition of directors and writers playing with the forms of film and television. Quentin Tarantino is a filmmaker who plays with the form of cinema by mixing genres, history and fiction together to construct a believable reality, as shown in *Django Unchained* (2012) (see Figure 1.4.2).

FACT AND FICTION

Fiction film relies on a sort of contract between the viewer and the film. Viewers willingly suspend their disbelief as part of their engagement with a film text. The audience knows the film is fictional and that it is constructed to appear as reality, but goes along with this in order to enjoy themselves and take pleasure in viewing the work.

Knowing that a film is a construction is all very well when looking at fiction—it is a constructed reality of a fictional event. It is interesting to think about what happens when an audience views a representation of a real event or what happens when representation and reality meet in documentaries or the news.

The representation of reality has been an area of interest and concern since artists first started depicting the world around them. This discussion was fuelled by the invention of the camera, which could create a facsimile of the world.

Some say the invention of the camera was one of the forbears of modern art. Some art historians say that because the camera captured reality, artists were no longer obliged to do so. This meant artists were free to interpret reality rather than reproduce it. This lead to art movements such as impressionism, cubism, surrealism and abstract expressionism, all of which were concerned with the artists' relationship to reality rather than their reproduction of it.

R. Dunscombe, *Focus on Folio*, page 88

The earliest films were documentaries. The Lumière brothers set up the camera and filmed workers leaving their factory. Similarly, one of the earliest films in Australia is of workers leaving a biscuit factory in Hawthorn, Victoria. The answer to the question, 'Did these early films capture reality?' is both 'Yes' and 'No'. Of course, they were actual workers and they were leaving an actual factory at the end of their working day. However, many film theoreticians argue that the films were not an accurate representation of the events because they did not accurately reflect the events—or more particularly, the behaviour of the workers.

PRO-FILMIC EVENT

A pro-filmic event means that the act of filming changes the reality and that people behave differently when they know they are being filmed. This was certainly the case in the biscuit factory film. The workers are seen smiling and waving. It seems unlikely that they did that every day when they left work. They also cleaned themselves up and dressed in their best clothes because they knew they were going to be filmed.

Think about your behaviour and that of your classmates in front of a camera. Consider how you think your behaviour would change if you knew you were being filmed. This is amplified when considering the role of audience. Consider how you think you and your classmates' behaviour would differ if you knew the audience was to be your parents as opposed to if it was to consist of your peers in another state or country.

So, in representing reality, two constraints have been identified so far, the camera and the audience.

REALITY: POINT OF VIEW

In the construction of media realities, you also have to take into account the idea of point of view. All media products are constructed with and from a particular point of view. The creator, the society and the context influence this point. It is important to remember when viewing/interacting with media texts that there is no 'neutral' position. As you have seen, you need to take into account the society that produced the text as well as the people who made it.

The US comedian Jerry Seinfeld illustrated the importance of the point of view of the maker in a sketch about nature documentaries. He pointed out that when the antelope is the 'star' you are on its side when the lion is chasing it and the next week when the lion is the 'star' you want the lion to catch the antelope.

Learning activities

PART A

1 Re-read the Seinfeld example of the lion and the antelope.
   a How do you think the filmmaker achieves this identification?
   b How do you think each of these episodes ends?
   c What is the reality in this situation? Do you think the camera influences the outcome?

2 Look at news broadcasts of an event on a commercial station, the ABC and SBS.
   a Compare how they have represented the event. What are the similarities and differences?
   b Write out an alternative version of the news report from the point of view of one of the parties involved. Present this to the class.

3 Plan two brief documentaries of your school: one is for parents of prospective students and one is to apply for more funds for buildings and facilities. The reality is the same—the school is still the school—but how will you represent it?

PART B

4 Look at Figure 1.4.3. How does it differ from other media representations you have seen of conflicts?

5 Do you think it is possible for a graphic artist like Joe Sacco to report accurately? What do you think the advantages and disadvantages are of the medium he uses to create his representations?

6 Look at a newspaper image or television footage of a conflict that has happened recently and answer these questions:
   a What is being represented?
   b How is it being represented?
   c Who made or produced the representation?
   d When was it made? How does it fit with other images of the time? How did events of the time shape the representation?
   e Why is this being represented and why is it being represented in this way?
   f What is being emphasised and what is being left out?
   g What do you understand by the representation? Would others have the same understanding?
   h What alternative representations have you seen? What is the difference between them?

ALTERNATE REALITIES

Joe Sacco is a reporter who specialises in reporting wars and conflicts; however, he does not reproduce the reality he sees in a mechanical or digital way. Sacco is a graphic novelist. He is also a reporter who inserts himself into the story and one who is aware that he is constructing a reality that is not objective (see Figure 1.4.3).

FIGURE 1.4.3 Joe Sacco is author/artist and reporter and the character with the glasses.

1.5 Reality and reality television

Reality television is a classic example of the way the media can construct a reality and the way that the audience of that reality can willingly suspend its disbelief. We know it is not reality we are watching but we usually choose to ignore that—otherwise, it wouldn't be any fun!

REALITY TELEVISION

Reality television shows cover a broad spectrum, ranging from the survival/adventure/endurance shows to dating and romance, to the workplace. No matter what the format is, they all share the basic elements of a constructed reality. The final product is created via a process of selection, omission and construction.

SELECTION

The process of selection begins when the writers or producers create the idea or vision for the show. Obviously, the show does not come out of nowhere. In most cases, it begins with an idea or a pitch, which is then developed. Ideas are selected (and often omitted) and potential episodes or scenarios are written up. Each of these scenarios is created around a central idea, which may be a task, event, audition, challenge or similar. These then develop into shooting scripts so the technical crew can film it.

The course of a reality television show tends to follow the lines of a classical narrative/story structure. There is the introduction where the viewer is introduced to the players and the goals are set; the playout where the players encounter obstacles that they need to overcome; and the resolution, where the show is wrapped up, the goals achieved and the winners have attained money, perhaps a relationship or a successful commercial deal, together, of course, with a certain degree of fame. This structure follows a character or characters' journey to a resolution. This journey may be over the course of the series, which is usually the case with survival/endurance, cooking or dating/relationship shows, or it may be over the course of an episode, which is usually the case with employment-type reality shows.

In general, the viewer concludes that the situations in reality television shows are constructed. The people in reality television are real people and, generally, they are not paid actors. Nevertheless, it is debatable as to whether they would act this way if they did not know they were being filmed.

FIGURE 1.5.1 The creator of *Survivor*, Mark Burnett, refers to it not as a reality television show, but as an unscripted drama.

The process of selection is most obvious when we look at the contestants. They are not chosen at random and, most likely, the writers have given the producers a 'cast' of character types, or character traits that they would like the contestants to have (see Figure 1.5.2). The selection of contestants also depends on the demographic or type of audience the producers want to attract. The audience for a dating reality television show will differ in a number of ways from the audience of a cooking or building reality television show.

OMISSION AND CONSTRUCTION

The creation of a television reality show is not an easy task. In addition to the cast, there is a massive number of support crew working behind the scenes to create sets, props and challenges. There is at least one (usually more) camera per contestant. One camera operator who worked on American *Survivor* said that during the challenges there were often more than eighty crew members working behind the scenes.

Selection and omission can occur in the actual production in terms of what to shoot and what not to shoot. Omission and construction largely occurs in the construction or post-production of the show, which involves what shots to leave in and what shots to leave out. Generally, the main construction takes place in the editing suite—this is where the story and characters are created from the existing footage. In reality television, the amount of footage that is shot is staggering. For a show with twelve contestants with two cameras on them filming ten-plus hours a day, the footage can run into hundreds of hours. In some cases, the producers and editors create thirteen–hour episodes from more than 2000 hours of camera footage!

> In the reality television industry, the result of editing together different sound bites to create a new conversation is called a 'frankenbite'. It is named after Dr Frankenstein, the fictional character who created a monster out of different body parts.

The editing shapes the story and constructs characters, both heroes and villains. Participants on reality television shows are selected/cast according to the types in the pitch, treatment or scenario. Their character traits are reinforced in the editing so that each show will generally have the:

- strong one
- annoying one
- conceited one
- one with the compelling backstory
- struggler.

FIGURE 1.5.2 The contestants of *The Bachelor*

One of the tricks used to create a character is to edit together bits of separate conversations to create a new dialogue. This is usually done to create intrigue or to reinforce a character trait. One way to spot this is the use of cutaways or voice-overs. When a player is seen talking, then a shot is presented of something else before cutting back to the player, or when the player is talking over other footage this is often a sign that the audio has been manipulated.

Learning activities

1 Write a list of reality television shows you have watched or that you know about.
   a What categories would you put them in (cooking, dating and so on)?
   b Name two character/contestant types you would expect to see for each category.

2 Create the outline for a new reality television show. You will need to:
   - outline the basic idea of the show including what it is about, what the goals of the contestants are and some obstacles or challenges they may face
   - identify your target audience and why you have chosen it
   - create a profile of the type of characters you would want to be among the contestants
   - work out how you will cast it
   - outline the first three episodes.

3 Create a pitch for your show to sell to the television company.

4 Create promotional material for your show. You may choose to make a:
   - poster or print ad
   - short radio promotion
   - short video trailer, a 'coming soon'.

1.6 Media reality and hyper-reality

The media has great power when it constructs realities because it does not construct a reality but rather a representation of a reality.

SIMULACRA

Cultural theorists such as Jean Baudrillard and Umberto Eco theorise that the media has great power when it constructs realities.

Baudrillard argues that the media does not build a reality but a representation of a reality, which he calls simulacra or hyper-reality (see Figure 1.6.1). The audience enters into what Baudrillard calls a false reality that is made up of representations so convincing that they have replaced what was once real. The power of these simulacra of reality lie in the way audiences relate to them as though they were an actual reality rather than a representation of a reality. When audiences see this, combined with the ideas of myth making in society and its cultural products that Roland Barthes wrote about, they tend to read the myths and media representations of reality as reality itself.

This is a very complicated process but it can become clearer when looking at some examples. Both Baudrillard and Eco use Disneyland® as one of their examples. They argue that an attraction like 'Main Street, USA'® is a replica of an original street that never existed in the first place. They further argue that the replica (or simulacra) cannot be a direct copy but one that has been influenced by the myths and myth building of the society that created it.

In terms of the media constructing reality, Baudrillard and Eco argue that audiences no longer refer to real, experienced worlds, but to this copied simulacra of reality—that is, when people think of the main street in a small town in the USA they think of the Disney version. The audience sees a media-constructed reality overtaking their experienced reality, so that the media creation has escaped or moved beyond the confines of media texts and products.

FIGURE 1.6.1 In *Café Society* (2016), Woody Allen created a hyper-realised version of the 1930s—an idealised version that did not exist.

There are also examples of simulacra in Australia. Victoria's popular tourist attraction Sovereign Hill is a simulated representation of what the Victorian goldfields in the late 1800s may have looked like. Visitors walk down the main street, look in typical shops and houses of the era and even talk to people in period costume who 'live' there. However, Sovereign Hill, as it looks today, never existed and was not a Gold Rush town at all. Up until the late 1960s, it was a deserted gold diggings that had turned back into bush. The town was created from this bushland and Sovereign Hill opened as a town in 1970.

Taking this further, and seeing that much of what people know has been experienced via media constructions, theorists like Barthes, Baudrillard and Eco ask people to question how they attain their knowledge and to be careful when they enter a branded reality. Not everyone agrees with these and other postmodern theorists, but their work provides much to think about when looking at media texts and the role the media plays in society.

Writers such as Barthes, Baudrillard and Eco suggest that the media and media texts construct a reality and that maybe that constructed reality has broader implications for our society.

FIGURE 1.6.2 Main Street, USA®, Walt Disney World® Resort, Florida

FIGURE 1.6.3 Sovereign Hill, Ballarat, is a fictional construction of an Australian mining town.

Learning activities

1 What other examples of hyper-reality/simulacra can you think of or have you experienced?

2 Discuss: if media constructions are not reality, then what is? Can reality be reproduced at all?

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Media products are not reality; they are representations of a constructed reality. This reality may be a fictional construction or it may refer to aspects of 'the real world', such as a documentary or the news.

- Representations in a media product may be fictional characters or modelled on actual people, but they can also be ideas, social groups, events or issues.

- Representations rely on codes and conventions, which are culturally based and differ among cultures. They are also constantly changing and differ within the same culture over time.

- When looking at particular constructed representations, it is important also to look at who created the representation, where and why it was created and what the purpose of the representation was or is.

- The reality that is constructed in media texts is not neutral but contains ideologies and values. Therefore, the readings of these texts have broader implications for the society.

ASSESSMENT TASKS

1 Produce two full-page magazine advertisements: one showing women in a traditional role (e.g. as a housewife or sexual object) and one in a non-stereotypical representation. The advertisements can be for any product and magazine you wish.

    Before you produce your advertisements, write an intention explaining what you will portray, why you have chosen these representations, how you will communicate them to an audience, and who the target audience is.

    Upon completing the task, evaluate your advertisements by assessing how well you met your intended aims and considering what you did well and where you could improve in the future.

2 Trace the history of a representation as portrayed in the Australian media. It could be a representation of gender, ethnicity, age or any other that you identify. You will need to research early and recent examples and chart the progression and changes of the representation over a period of time. Analyse at least two representations from your research using these questions as a focus for each:
    - What is represented?
    - How is it represented?
    - Who made or produced the representation?
    - When was the representation made? How does it fit in with other representations of the time? How did events of the time shape the representation?

    - Why is this being represented? Why is it being represented in this way?
    - What is emphasised and what is left out?
    - What do you understand by the representation? Would others have the same understanding?
    - What alternative representations have you seen? What is the difference between them?

    Present your work as an illustrated essay, or a written report with an accompanying slideshow presentation.

3 Write a television advertisement aimed at breaking down stereotypes in modern society. Storyboard your advertisement shot by shot with annotations describing the technical codes you will use to create your representation. If time permits, film your advertisement or create a mock-up using Microsoft® PowerPoint®.

    You will have to write a statement of what you intend to do, why, how and what the intention is, and who the audience is, and then you will need to evaluate the finished product.

    Evaluation involves looking at what you did, how you did it, whether it achieved what you set out to do, what you think went well and not so well, and what you would do differently next time.

2 Media and change

Media technology is developing at an unfathomable rate and has massive implications for the way we communicate and interact with each other. The emergence of new media technology has always had far-reaching social, economic, political and legal implications. It is accompanied by great promise and also great fear.

The increasing availability of media technology means that ordinary people have the opportunity to create and distribute their own media texts, challenging the very notion of the mass media and upending a paradigm that has existed since the advent of the printing press.

2.1 A brief history of the mass media

To understand the mass media, it's necessary to understand the history of mass communication.

FIGURE 2.1.1 Johannes Gutenberg

1453 Johannes Gutenberg (see Figure 2.1.1) develops the moveable type printing press. The development of the printing press and the wider availability of education led to increasing levels of literacy across Europe, sparking the Renaissance and marking the first step towards an information society.

1556 *Notizie Scritte*, a monthly publication by the Venetian government, becomes one of the earliest newspapers to be published in Europe.

1785 *The Times* is first published in London. It wasn't until the eighteenth century that newspapers became more frequent publications.

1870 The introduction of pulp-based paper leads to the widespread publication of newspapers, books and so-called 'penny dreadfuls'.

1906 The first (silent) feature film, *The Story of the Kelly Gang*, is made in Australia.

1921 Radio station KDKA in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA, makes its first national broadcast. Within a decade, the wireless becomes a household item, redefining the way that people receive news and entertainment and introducing the concept of broadcasting.

1927 Major film studios work together to introduce sound to motion pictures, leading to the widespread success of 'talkies'. *The Jazz Singer* is the first feature film to have dialogue.

1956 The first television broadcast is made in Australia (see Figure 2.1.2). Television soon spreads to the entire country. Popular programs in the early days of Australian television include *Bandstand*, *Six O'Clock Rock* and *In Melbourne Tonight*.

FIGURE 2.1.2 People watching television, circa 1956

1975 Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* hits theatres, becoming the first film to take more than US$100 million at the box office and spawning a new era of blockbuster films.

1975 The MITS Altair 8800, a microcomputer available in kit form and consisting of little more than a series of flashing LEDs, starts the personal computer revolution.

1977 Apple® releases the Apple II, one of the earliest personal computers. Companies start mass-producing video players, sparking a war between rival formats VHS and Betamax.

1977 George Lucas's *Star Wars* hits theatres.

1978 Space Invaders, the arcade game designed by Tomohiro Nishikado, is released (see Figure 2.1.3).

FIGURE 2.1.3 Space Invaders

1979 Sony® releases the Walkman TPS-L2, which helps the sale of cassette tapes to eventually eclipse LP records.

1981 MTV is launched in the USA. The first music video broadcast on the new network is 'Video Killed the Radio Star' by The Buggles.

1982 Billy Joel's *52nd Street* is the first album released on CD.

1983 Nintendo® releases the Nintendo Entertainment System in Japan.

1984 Apple releases the Macintosh computer (see Figure 2.1.4).

FIGURE 2.1.4 The Macintosh computer

1993 Mosaic, one of the earliest web browsers is released, leading to increased use of the World Wide Web.

1994 The Sony Playstation® is released in Japan.

1995 Microsoft releases the web browser, Internet Explorer®.

1995 Amazon® opens its virtual doors for business.

1996 *Twister* is the first Hollywood film released on DVD.

1997 Larry Page and Sergey Brin register google.com as a domain name for their search engine, previously called BackRub.

1999 The peer-to-peer file sharing system Napster is released.

2001 Napster shuts down its servers, complying with an injunction to stop distributing copyrighted music.

2001 Microsoft releases the Xbox® in the USA.

2003 Myspace is launched.

2003 Steam, a digital distribution service for videos games, is launched.

2004 Google™ indexes 6 billion items, including 4.28 billion webpages.

2004 The term Web 2.0 is widely used to describe the way websites incorporate greater interactivity, sociability and user-generated content.

2004 Facebook® is launched.

2004 Blizzard Entertainment® releases *World of Warcraft*®, which will become the world's largest 'massively multiplayer online role-playing game', with more than 11 million subscribers.

2005 YouTube™ is launched.

2005 Microsoft launches the Xbox 360™.

2006 The first Blu-ray™ titles are released, including *The Fifth Element* and *The Terminator*.

2006 Sony launches the PS3 (PlayStation 3™).

2007 Apple launches the iPhone® (see Figure 2.1.5).

FIGURE 2.1.5 The iPhone was the first smartphone to appear on the market.

2007 Netflix™ ships its billionth DVD and starts an online, video-streaming service.

2007 Microsoft launches OneDrive™. In the following years, cloud storage becomes the norm with competitors Dropbox™ and Google Drive™ entering the market.

2007 Google enters the smartphone market, launching the Android™.

2007 Amazon launches the Kindle™ e-book reader.

2008 Google indexes 1 trillion URLs.

2008 Google releases the first public version of the Android.

2008 Spotify® launches their online music-streaming service.

2010 James Cameron's *Avatar* becomes the first film to earn more than US$2 billion.

2010 Apple's iTunes® store sells 10 billion songs.

2010 Apple releases the iPad®.

2010 WikiLeaks launches the Afghanistan war files.

2010 Social networking app Instagram is launched.

2011 The first version of Snapchat is launched.

2011 Apple introduces the personal assistant, Siri®.

2013 The first documents from National Security Agency whistleblower Edward Snowden are published in *The Guardian*, detailing the extent of the USA's mass surveillance program.

2013 Sony releases the PS4™ and Microsoft announces the Xbox One, ushering in a new generation of console gaming.

2013 Google launches the Chromecast™ video-streaming device.

2013 Samsung™ releases its first-generation smartwatch, the Samsung Gear™. Wearable smart devices are becoming more common.

2014 Microsoft and Amazon launch their own personal assistants, Cortana™ and Alexa™, in competition with Siri.

2014 Sarah Koenig releases the first episode of Serial, a podcast cited as sparking a podcasting renaissance.

2015 Apple launched its smartwatch, Apple Watch®. By this stage other companies, such as Fitbit® and Misfit™, are offering a range of wearable devices compatible with smartphones.

2015 Wikipedia's English language edition reaches 5 million articles.

2015 Australian streaming service Stan®, a collaboration between Nine Entertainment™ and Fairfax Media, is launched.

2015 The Apple Music® streaming service is launched in 100 countries.

2015 Live streaming app Periscope™ is launched.

2016 Facebook launches Facebook Live®, which allows people to stream live content directly from their smartphones.

2016 Oculus Rift™, one of the earliest mass market virtual reality headsets, is launched. Later that year, Sony releases the PlayStation VR headset in what is touted as the coming of age for virtual reality (see Figure 2.1.6).

FIGURE 2.1.6 The PlayStation VR headset

1. The invention of moveable type was a significant step forward in the development of mass communication. Who had the power to distribute information to the masses in the early days of the media?

2. The rise of Web 2.0 has changed the way that people interact with the mass media. How is this different to the days when television, radio and print were the most widely used forms of media?

3. The television is an iconic image of the twentieth century. Based on what is currently available, which form of media do you think will become an iconic image of the twenty-first century? Explain your answer.

4. Identify the top ten most important mass communication developments in the timeline and briefly explain the reasons for your choice.

5. Brainstorm a list of new media technologies, including hardware, software or any other form of new communication technology that you can think of.

6. Identify five developments or changes that have occurred in the mass media during the last twelve months that might have a significant impact on the way people communicate. Think about important developments in hardware, software and the way that traditional forms of media are adapting to or accommodating these changes.

Don't touch that dial!

A HISTORY OF MEDIA TECHNOLOGY SCARES, FROM THE PRINTING PRESS TO FACEBOOK

Respected Swiss scientist Conrad Gessner might have been the first to raise the alarm about the effects of information overload. In a landmark book, he described how the modern world overwhelmed people with data and that this overabundance was both 'confusing and harmful' to the mind. The media now echo his concerns with reports on the unprecedented risks of living in an 'always on' digital environment. It's worth noting that Gessner, for his part, never once used e-mail and was completely ignorant about computers. That's not because he was a technophobe but because he died in 1565. His warnings referred to the seemingly unmanageable flood of information unleashed by the printing press.

Worries about information overload are as old as information itself, with each generation reimagining the dangerous impacts of technology on mind and brain. From a historical perspective, what strikes home is not the evolution of these social concerns, but their similarity from one century to the next, to the point where they arrive anew with little having changed except the label.

These concerns stretch back to the birth of literacy itself. In parallel with modern concerns about children's overuse of technology, Socrates famously warned against writing because it would 'create forgetfulness in the learners' souls, because they will not use their memories'. He also advised that children can't distinguish fantasy from reality, so parents should only allow them to hear wholesome allegories and not 'improper' tales, lest their development go astray. The Socratic warning has been repeated many times since: The older generation warns against a new technology and bemoans that society is abandoning the 'wholesome' media it grew up with, seemingly unaware that this same technology was considered to be harmful when first introduced.

Gessner's anxieties over psychological strain arose when he set about the task of compiling an index of every available book in the 16th century, eventually published as the *Bibliotheca Universalis*. Similar concerns arose in the 18th century, when newspapers became more common. The French statesman Malesherbes railed against the fashion for getting news from the printed page, arguing that it socially isolated readers and detracted from the spiritually uplifting group practice of getting news from the pulpit. A hundred years later, as literacy became essential and schools were widely introduced, the curmudgeons turned against education for being unnatural and a risk to mental health. An 1883 article in the weekly medical journal the *Sanitarian* argued that schools 'exhaust the children's brains and nervous systems with complex and multiple studies, and ruin their bodies by protracted imprisonment'.

Meanwhile, excessive study was considered a leading cause of madness by the medical community.

When radio arrived, we discovered yet another scourge of the young: The wireless was accused of distracting children from reading and diminishing performance in school, both of which were now considered to be appropriate and wholesome. In 1936, the music magazine the *Gramophone* reported that children had 'developed the habit of dividing attention between the humdrum preparation of their school assignments and the compelling excitement of the loudspeaker' and described how the radio programs were disturbing the balance of their excitable minds. The television caused widespread concern as well: Media historian Ellen Wartella has noted how 'opponents voiced concerns about how television might hurt radio, conversation, reading, and the patterns of family living and result in the further vulgarization of American culture'.

By the end of the 20th century, personal computers had entered our homes, the Internet was a global phenomenon, and almost identical worries were widely broadcast through chilling headlines: CNN reported that 'Email "hurts IQ more than pot",' *The Telegraph* that 'Twitter and Facebook could harm moral values' and the 'Facebook and Myspace generation "cannot form relationships",' and the *Daily Mail* ran a piece on 'How using Facebook could raise your risk of cancer'. Not a single shred of evidence underlies these stories, but they make headlines across the world because they echo our recurrent fears about new technology.

These fears have also appeared in feature articles for more serious publications: Nicolas Carr's influential article 'Is Google making us stupid?' for *The Atlantic* suggested the Internet was sapping our attention and stunting our reasoning; the *Times of London* article 'Warning: brain overload' said digital technology is damaging our ability to empathize; and a piece in the *New York Times* titled 'The lure of data: is it addictive?' raised the question of whether technology could be causing attention deficit disorder. All of these pieces have one thing in common—they mention not one study on how digital technology is affecting the mind and brain. They tell anecdotes about people who believe they can no longer concentrate, talk to scientists doing peripherally related work, and that's it. Imagine if the situation in Afghanistan were discussed in a similar way. You could write 4000 words for a major media outlet without ever mentioning a relevant fact about the war. Instead, you'd base your thesis on the opinions of your friends and the guy down the street who works in the kebab shop. He's actually from Turkey, but it's all the same, though, isn't it?

There is, in fact, a host of research that directly tackles these issues. To date, studies suggest there is no consistent evidence that the Internet causes mental problems. If anything, the data show that people who use social networking sites actually tend to have better offline social lives, while those who play computer games are better than nongamers at absorbing and reacting to information with no loss of accuracy or increased impulsiveness. In contrast, the accumulation of many years of evidence suggests that heavy television viewing does appear to have a negative effect on our health and our ability to concentrate. We almost never hear about these sorts of studies anymore because television is old hat, technology scares need to be novel, and evidence that something is safe just doesn't make the grade in the shock-horror media agenda.

The writer Douglas Adams (see Figure 2.1.7) observed how technology that existed when we were born seems normal, anything that is developed before we turn 35 is exciting, and whatever comes after that is treated with suspicion. This is not to say all media technologies are harmless, and
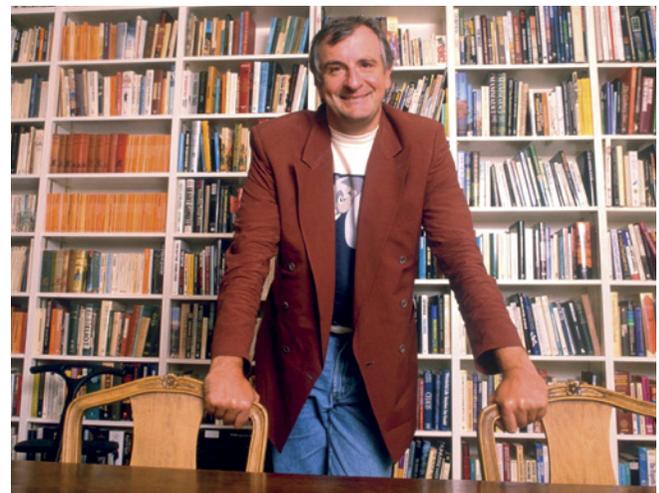
FIGURE 2.1.7 UK author Douglas Adams

I've come up with a set of rules that describe our reactions to technologies:

1 Anything that is in the world when you're born is normal and ordinary and is just a natural part of the way the world works.
2 Anything that's invented between when you're 15 and 35 is new and exciting and revolutionary and you can probably get a career in it.
3 Anything invented after you're 35 is against the natural order of things.

The Salmon of Doubt, Douglas Adams, 2002

there is an important debate to be had about how new developments affect our bodies and minds. But history has shown that we rarely consider these effects in anything except the most superficial terms because our suspicions get the better of us. In retrospect, the debates about whether schooling dulls the brain or whether newspapers damage the fabric of society seem peculiar, but our children will undoubtedly feel the same about the technology scares we entertain now.

It won't be long until they start the cycle anew.

Vaughan Bell, *Slate Magazine*, 15 February 2010.
Vaughan Bell is a clinical and neuropsychologist at the Universidad de Antioquia, Colombia, and King's College London.

Learning activities

1 Identify five past or present concerns about media technology mentioned in the 'Don't touch that dial!' article.

2 In your own words, describe the term 'moral panic'? Do you believe that people's moral concerns about the effect of media technology are justified or over-exaggerated? Explain your answer.

3 Choose five recent news stories from the technology sections of national, state or local print or web-based newspapers and briefly summarise the technology focus and any issues that arise from the technology being highlighted in the articles.

4 Create a short video or podcast about the way media consumption has changed. Identify someone from your parent's generation or older and interview them about their patterns of media consumption. Use the following questions as a starting point:
   • What types of media did you use for entertainment when you were growing up?
   • How was this technology different to what you use today?
   • How did you obtain news and information when you were younger?
   • How do you obtain news and information now?
   • What is your favourite form of new media technology? Why?
   • Is there anything you miss about obsolete forms of media or technology?

   Edit the responses together and share them with your class.

ANALYSING MEDIA CHANGE

Assessing the impact of media technology is challenging. The media has complex and far-reaching implications for peoples' lives. The rate of technological development means that change often occurs quickly. The implications of this change quickly become accepted as normal or natural by-products of media use. Given the dynamic and disruptive nature of new media, the following framework is a useful way to consider the impact media technology has on peoples' lives while avoiding any superficial moral panic. The framework asks you to consider new media in terms of industry, culture, economy, audience, government, ethics and society. You can remember these factors with the acronym 'ICEAGES'.

INDUSTRY

Technology drives the way the mass media operates, produces texts and reaches audiences. In the last two decades, technology has changed the news media irrevocably. The rise of the internet has challenged traditional print publications, gouging circulation and sales figures. In response, newspapers have moved online and explored other sources of revenue including pay walls, online advertising and sponsorship. Traditional newspapers have also started providing more than just news stories, often including video and audio content in their stories. The internet has also fundamentally changed the way audiences get news and information. When considering the impact that new technology might have on established industries, always pay attention to the way it affects media production and distribution.

CULTURE

New technology invariably redefines art and entertainment, providing new opportunities for self-expression. The widespread adoption of DVDs, for example, allowed audiences to 'binge watch' entire seasons of television at once. Alongside the development of cable channels in the USA, this technology led to the rise of long-form storytelling and acclaimed television dramas like *The Sopranos* and *The Wire*. New media technology has also led to a creative and cultural revolution that has put the means of production into the hands of audiences. With little more than a mobile phone and internet connection, ordinary people now have the ability to create film that can be distributed to millions. When analysing the impact of new media forms, always consider how these new platforms and technologies allow people to create, consume and share culture.

ECONOMY

The dynamic and disruptive potential of new media technology is evident in the economic changes that have occurred in recent years. New media technologies have presented economic opportunities and challenges for existing industries. At the turn of the century, the music industry was faced with the challenge of dealing with digital downloads. Increasing internet speed and peer-to-peer file sharing meant that people were able to easily pirate and share music with each other. While this proved challenging for the record industry, it provided unsigned artists with a way to circumvent the industry and share music directly with fans. While the rise of music streaming was initially regarded as a threat to the music industry, profits from streaming services have surged. At the end of 2016, record company Warner Music reported a US$3.25 billion profit, their highest in eight years. Almost a third of the profits came from streaming services such as Spotify and Apple Music. Always consider the economic possibilities of new media and the challenges it might pose to existing businesses.

AUDIENCE

Before the turn of the century, large corporations who operated in the traditional forms of television, radio and print dominated the mass media. Audiences were largely consumers of this material. The rise of the internet and the falling cost of technology has significantly changed the relationship between media and audiences. Audiences now have the potential to create and share their own content, challenging a paradigm that has existed since the advent of the printing press. When you are reflecting on the implications of new media, always consider how it changes the way audiences consume, create and communicate.

GOVERNMENT

Governments often struggle to keep up with technological change. New media technology often presents legal and regulatory problems for governments. In Australia, for example, the rise of online app stores and video-sharing sites has challenged the system of traditional media regulation. The Classification Board has traditionally provided ratings for all video games. However, the overwhelming number of video games now available means that the government has been forced to explore other options for classifying content, including international, industry-based age-rating systems. Similarly the development of new media forms often challenges

regulations that governments might have regarding media ownership and operation. Digital media also provides new opportunities for online activism, changing the very nature of our democracy. When addressing the change occurring thanks to new media technology, always consider its legal, regulatory and political implications.

ETHICS

Ethics are the moral principles that guide behaviour. Because new media changes the way that people interact, it invariably poses ethical challenges for audiences and industry. Large corporations, such as Facebook and Google, encounter ethical issues regarding their operation, including their responsibility to curb bullying and hate speech, respect the privacy of users and monitor the accuracy of news. Audiences themselves face similar ethical issues, including their treatment of other users, sharing inappropriate content and the construction of their online identities. When thinking about new media technology, always consider the ethical issues that might arise.

SOCIETY

Media technology is integral to the way audiences communicate and socialise. Social networking platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Reddit™ provide opportunities for people to connect with others and form online communities. The introduction of new hardware and software will continue to influence the way people interact with each other. When thinking about a new media platform or technology, consider how it changes the way audiences communicate, interact and socialise.

Learning activity

With a partner, select a form of new media or media technology.

- Use a search engine to find articles about this form of new media technology that have been published in the last two years.

- Organise what you learn about the implications of this form of new media or technology under the following headings: audience, society, economy, industry, government, culture and ethics.

- Share your results with the class.

2.2 Copyright and change

The media is a multibillion-dollar industry. It makes sense that laws have developed to protect the work of creative individuals. Copyright laws, intellectual property, remixing, mashing up and sharing are areas of significant contention and change.

COPYRIGHT LAWS

The question of how intellectual property can be protected when copying and sharing files via the internet is a relatively easy exercise poses a significant challenge for copyright laws.

In his book *Free Culture* academic and attorney Lawrence Lessig argues that copyright laws exist largely to protect existing industries and do not benefit creativity:

> The burden of this law now vastly outweighs any original benefit—certainly as it affects noncommercial creativity, and increasingly as it affects commercial creativity as well … the law's role is less and less to support creativity, and more and more to protect certain industries against competition. Just at the time digital technology could unleash an extraordinary range of commercial and noncommercial creativity, the law burdens this creativity with insanely complex and vague rules and with the threat of obscenely severe penalties.

DIGITAL RIGHTS MANAGEMENT

Digital rights management (DRM) is a way to control the way digital files are used. Most platforms that sell or stream digital content use DRM to restrict unauthorised copying of digital works. DRM encrypts files to prevent them from being duplicated or accessed on other formats. For example, a song that has been purchased on one platform may be restricted so that it can only be played on that platform or associated device.

While companies are keen to use DRM to protect their intellectual property, this sort of encryption has its share of critics. Cory Doctorow, digital rights activist and author, argues that DRM is a threat to security, privacy, public rights and innovation and has been to the detriment of artists and freedom of speech. In 2015, Doctorow and the Electronic Frontiers Foundation joined forces to seek to put an end to DRM and the legal structures that support it. They argued

that the success of an information society depends on digital content being accessible. They explained that DRM locks information behind electronic barriers and hinders the development of a rich public domain of information that can be used by educators, researchers and people around the world.

THE ARGUMENT IN FAVOUR OF COPYRIGHT

Established and highly profitable industries have argued in favour of existing copyright laws to protect the work of artists and the revenue that flows towards these industries. At the 2014 Australian International Movie Convention, actor John Jarratt argued passionately about piracy and its impact on Australian film:

> It's fatal at the moment and it's going to kill the Australian film industry—there's no doubt about that—very, very shortly and within the next few years. There's a cure to this cancer, and it's simply buy your entertainment like you have to buy everything else in this world. You're not supposed to take things for nothing and steal from people and take their livelihood.

THE CREATIVE COMMONS MOVEMENT

The Creative Commons project was developed to allow people to share and reuse copyright material in a manner that is legal and consistent with the rules of copyright. Creative Commons is not an alternative to existing copyright laws. Rather, it works alongside them. As a movement, Creative Commons gives people greater freedom to manage their copyright works. Someone who releases a song under a Creative Commons licence, for example, is able to share that song and is granting permission for other people to reuse the work or adapt it, provided that attribution is given to the original copyright holder.

CREATIVE COMMONS WEBSITES

Creative Commons websites are rich sources of photographs, video and audio. Sharing your work on social media sites like Facebook, YouTube and Vimeo often requires having copyright clearance for any third-party material that you use. Given that getting clearance for music can often be a difficult and expensive process, it's a good idea to see what you can find at notable Creative Commons websites. Most Creative Commons licences allow you to reuse, remix and share material with little more than an attribution of the original author.

■ Incompetech™ is a website that was established by composer Kevin McCloud. The site features dozens of compositions in a range of genres that can be used in videos or other works.

■ Bensound is a site created and maintained by composer Benjamin Tissot. It features a range of tracks in genres such as jazz, rock, electronica and folk music.

■ Freesound™, an initiative of the Music Technology Group of Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona, is a vast collection of sound effects licensed under Creative Commons.

■ Pexels is a website of stock images that are distributed via Creative Commons Zero (CC0) licences, which means that the original creators have no copyright over their work, allowing you to use it for free.

COPYRIGHT AND PATENT CLASHES

The tension between creation and copyright has led to high-profile legal battles between artists, corporations and copyright holders:

■ 1991: Rapper Biz Markie sampled a ten-second loop from the song *Alone Again* by Gilbert O'Sullivan (see Figure 2.2.1). The subsequent legal battle incited by Grand Upright Music who represented O'Sullivan resulted in an out-of-court settlement and the song was removed from the record. This case had an enormous impact on hip hop artists who had previously borrowed liberally from other tracks, necessitating that they receive clearance for all samples.

■ 1994: Apple launched legal action against Microsoft for copying the graphical user interface used on their Macintosh computers. During the case, Microsoft argued that Apple had initially stolen the idea for a graphical user interface from Xerox™. The judge ultimately ruled that the desktop metaphor used in a graphical user interface could not be protected under copyright law. Three years later the two companies resolved to end the agreement.

FIGURE 2.2.1 Biz Markie was a rapper who was embroiled in a copyright clash for sampling parts of a well-known song.

■ 2007: Viacom™ launched a US$1 billion legal action against Google, the owner of YouTube, for violating the copyright of programs like *South Park* and *The Daily Show*. The case was in court for six years and the judge ultimately ruled in favour of YouTube because it did not encourage its users to upload infringing content.

■ 2008: The television program *Spicks and Specks* broadcast a segment pointing out the similarities between the iconic flute riff in Men at Work's 'Down Under' and the children's song 'Kookaburra'. Larrikin Music, who owned the rights to 'Kookaburra', sued Men at Work for copyright infringement. The presiding judge ruled that copyright had been violated and the band was forced to pay five per cent of the royalties they had earned since 2002.

■ 2011: Apple launched legal action against Samsung for violating patents related to the operation of its smartphones. The legal battle between the two companies included fifty cases across nineteen countries.

Everything is a Remix

Everything is a Remix (2015) is a documentary by Kirby Ferguson exploring the nature of creativity and appropriation. It examines the creative process, explaining how artists have always copied, transformed and combined elements of past works to create new and original ones.

In the documentary, Ferguson cites *Star Wars* as an example of a work that remixes and reinterprets elements from other films. During its production, director George Lucas was influenced by countless films including *Flash Gordon* (1980), *Triumph of the Will* (1935) and *The Dam Busters* (1955). The droid C3PO was directly influenced by a robot from Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927). The scene in which Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) returns home to discover that his aunt and uncle have been murdered by Imperial troops directly references a similar scene in John Ford's *The Searchers* (1956) when Ethan Edwards (John Wayne) returns to discover his brother's family have been killed and the farm is in flames.

Culture, according to Ferguson, is similar to biological evolution. Instead of the copy, transformation and combination of genes, however, culture involves the reproduction and recombination of ideas, behaviours or skills. 'The interdependence of our creativity has been obscured by powerful cultural ideas, but technology is now exposing this connectedness,' he says. 'We're struggling legally, ethically and artistically to deal with these implications.'

We operate in a legal system that doesn't acknowledge the derivative nature of creativity. There is considerable tension between intellectual property, copyright laws and remix culture. Ferguson points out that, for much of history, ideas have been free. Copyright was initially developed to ensure that creators saw a return on the development of their work, which would subsequently revert to the public domain. More recent laws and trade agreements are based on the notion that ideas are property and should be protected. So-called 'sample trolls' and 'patent trolls' are organisations that aggressively take legal action for even minor infringements of copyright laws.

Learning activities

1   Watch the documentary *Everything is a Remix*.

2   As you are watching it, take notes on remix culture and copyright. Combine your notes using a collaborative document or wiki.

3   Use these notes to record a short video blog on the topic 'Remixing is an essential part of creation'.

THE BASIC ELEMENTS OF CREATIVITY
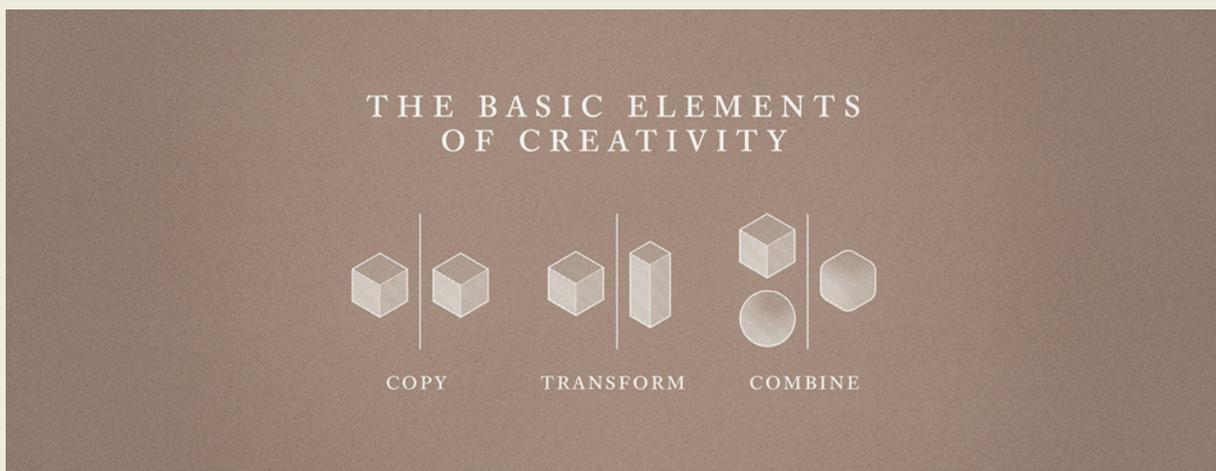
COPY   TRANSFORM   COMBINE

FIGURE 2.2.2 The basic elements of creativity. In his documentary *Everything is a Remix* (2015), Kirby Ferguson argues that all creative endeavour involves a process of copying, transforming and combining different codes and conventions.

2.3 Social networking

Since the turn of the century, social networking has become an integral part of the way people communicate and share information.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF SOCIAL NETWORKING

The development of social networking websites such as Facebook and Instagram has altered the way that people communicate and interact with each other. However, even before social networking websites became popular, the internet was used for social interaction, with people chatting online and swapping ideas and information.

In 2002, social networking started to reach a critical mass. The rise of Web 2.0 meant that more and more people were delving into the online world. Friendster™ was one of the first social networking websites to offer the functionality that users have come to expect from sites like Facebook, allowing people to publish content, add friends and send messages to each other. Within several months, Friendster had attracted over 3 million users—the potential of this new medium was obvious.

The launch of Myspace in 2003 brought social networking into the mainstream as users signed up to interact with their friends and their favourite musicians. By November 2005, Myspace boasted 26.7 million users and Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation purchased it for US$580 million. By the end of 2008, Facebook had eclipsed Myspace as the largest social networking website on the internet with 200 million unique users. By 2016, this figure had reached 1.79 billion.

Given the dominance of Facebook, rival social networking services have attempted to provide different experiences for users. Instagram became popular thanks to its exclusive focus on images and videos. Snapchat's temporary images and stories gave users a different experience. Twitter has continued to endure with its focus on 140-character microblogging.

Regardless of platform, social networking has transformed the way that we communicate with friends, family, celebrities and elected officials.

SOCIAL NETWORKING AND PRIVACY

With the increased use of social networking websites, never has the way people communicate been so public. In giving people the power to publish and share content, issues surrounding privacy have surfaced, with users expressing concerns that their private details are being exposed or shared among undesired networks. The other side of the privacy argument is that the internet is, by its very nature, a public forum and users of social networking websites should only publish information that they are comfortable sharing with a potentially wide and diverse audience.

Personal Information
- Real Name — 92%
- Interests — 84%
- Birthday — 82%
- City or Town — 71%
- School — 71%
- Relationship Status — 62%

Photos and Videos
- 91% of teens have a photo of themselves
- 24% have posted videos of themselves

Contact Information
- 53% of teens have posted their email address
- 20% have their cell phone number

But is the information real
26% of teen social media users say they post fake information on their profile to protect their privacy.

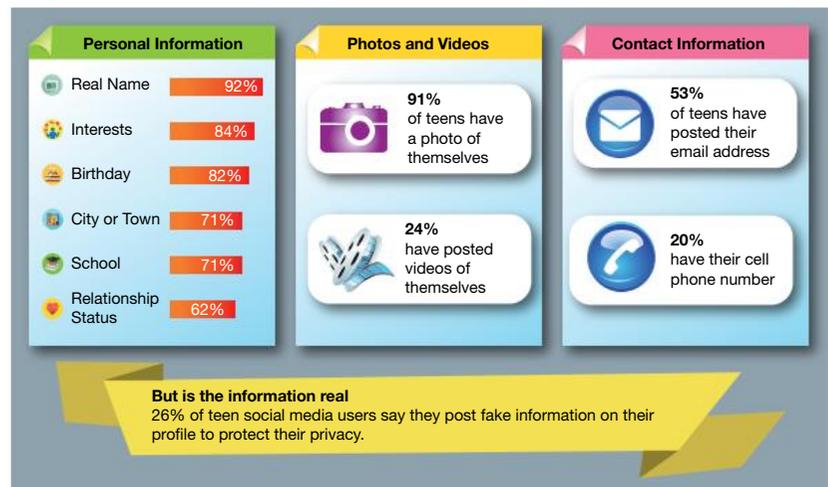**FIGURE 2.3.1** What teens share on social media in the USA.
Source: Pew Resource Centre

Learning activity

Find the terms and conditions for two popular social networking sites, such as Facebook and Instagram. In your own words, describe what they say about:

- the intellectual property of material that you post
- your responsibilities when using the social network
- who your information will be shared with.

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL NETWORKING

Social networking allows its users an unprecedented ability to connect with friends and family. The benefits of social networking for teenagers are well documented. In a 2011 literature review titled 'The benefits of social networking', researchers from the Inspire Foundation, Murdoch University and the University of Western Sydney documented the positive impact that social media can have on the lives of teenagers.

- Media literacy: The use of social media results in higher levels of media literacy, which involves not only technical skills but also a critical understanding about information and its credibility. Interaction with social media is more likely to develop in its users an understanding of how to create and share content, including images and video.

- Informal knowledge and skills: While schools and universities are leveraging social media to engage learners, the use of social media also promotes the independent development of knowledge and skills. While using social media, teenagers often engage in collaboration and self-directed learning using a variety of platforms and services—everything from Wikipedia® to YouTube.

- Creativity: Social media also encourages creativity as users become involved in blogging, photography, animation, video production and podcasting.

- Connecting with peers: Prominent social media researcher and academic Dana Boyd has written extensively about how social media allows teenagers to connect with their peers. In 'Why youth (heart) social network sites' she explains how teens use social media to 'hang out' with friends, develop a sense of identity, learn social cues and negotiate public life.

- Strengthening friendships: Considerable research has also found that social media allows teens to form stronger friendships. In the real world there are often barriers to hanging out with friends, which might include access to transport or the availability of safe spaces to gather. Social media overcomes these barriers and gives teenagers the opportunity to socialise any time they want to.

- Creating new friendships: According to the report, social media allows teens to form friendships based on mutual interests or values. These types of friendships are particularly valued by teenagers who suffer from illness or disability who may find it difficult to form friendships offline.

- Community: Social media allows people not only to strengthen real-world communities but also to form new groups based on shared interests. People might, for example, form online communities based on a shared love of popular culture, such as films or television.

- Political engagement: Social media provides opportunities for teenagers to become aware of social and political issues and also become involved in lobbying governments and corporations to achieve change.

- Wellbeing: The report argues that research into social media indicates that the combined effect of its impact on media literacy, learning, creativity, connectivity, friendship, community and political engagement has a positive influence on teenagers' overall wellbeing.

Critics of social networking have suggested that this technology might actually result in social isolation. A 2013 study at the University of Michigan titled 'Facebook use predicts declines in subjective well-being in young adults' found that increased use of social networking results in a reduced sense of wellbeing.

SELFIES, REPRESENTATION AND IDENTITY

The rise of social network resulted in selfies becoming a normalised ways of people representing themselves. The construction of a selfie reflects a great deal about your personality and how you want to be perceived. Some theorists suggest that these representations are empowering, others argue that they simply perpetuate the stereotypes found in mainstream media.

In 2014, *TIME* published an article by Jessica Bennett titled 'Our bodies, our selfies: the feminist photo revolution'. In the article, Bennett argues that young women are empowered by social media to redefine what is beautiful and resist traditional representations of gender and body image. In contrast, Erin Gloria Ryan at *Jezebel* argues that selfies merely perpetuate the idea that appearance is what matters most about women. She argues that most selfies don't celebrate achievement, empowerment or success, usually focusing exclusively on the face.

FIGURE 2.3.2 According to the *Salon* article 'This is your brain on selfies', the average millennial will take about 25,000 selfies in their lifetime.

Although selfies provide the promise of empowerment, these representations are still subject to the pull of mainstream media images. In a 2015 study titled 'How gender-stereotypical are selfies? A content analysis and comparison with magazine adverts', Nicola Döring, Anne Reif and Sandra Poeschl studied a random sample of 500 selfies uploaded to Instagram by both men and women. The photographs were analysed using a set of gender display categories developed by Erving Goffman. Goffman argued that women in advertisements are often described as passive, powerless and submissive through their posture and body language. The study found that selfies of both men and women not only reflected stereotypical representation of gender but were more prevalent in selfies than in traditional advertising.

AUDIENCE AS PRODUCT

Social networking is big business. By 2016, Facebook was worth US$350 billion, Instagram was worth US$35 billion and Twitter weighed in at US$23 billion. Given that these companies provide their products for free, users often don't think about how these tech behemoths make money. Like broadcast television and newspapers before them, the audience is the product, which is sold to advertisers. In the case of social networking, however, these companies have a very detailed picture of users thanks to the flood of information that they provide every day.

Social networking sites know your name, gender, location, likes, dislikes, friends, family and political beliefs and can build up a detailed understanding of your personality by analysing what you post, like and share. This information is then used to provide companies with targeted advertising.

In 2013, media theorist and author Douglas Rushkoff announced that he was leaving Facebook. In an article titled 'Why I'm leaving Facebook' he wrote:

> Facebook does not exist to help us make friends, but to turn our network of connections, brand preferences, and activities over time—our 'social graphs'—into a commodity for others to exploit. We Facebook users have been building a treasure lode of big data that government and corporate researchers have been mining to predict and influence what we buy and whom we vote for. We have been handing over to them vast quantities of information about ourselves and our friends, loved ones and acquaintances. With this information, Facebook and the 'big data' research firms purchasing their data predict still more things about us—from our future product purchases or sexual orientation to our likelihood for civil disobedience or even terrorism.

The information you give social networks feeds into algorithms that curate your social media experience, ensuring you will return and continue using the service.

ONLINE HARASSMENT

As social media has spread, there have been a number of high-profile online harassment cases. Gamergate was an online hate movement targeting prominent female game developers and journalists, notably Zoë Quinn, Brianna Wu and Anita Sarkeesian. Following Kotaku's allegedly biased reviews of her game Depression Quest, Zoë Quinn received ongoing harassment via social media including a death threat and rape threats. The Gamergate hashtag and hatred spread under the pretence of addressing political correctness and integrity in gaming journalism. Game developer Brianna Wu also became a target of online harassment after she weighed into the debate surrounding the issue. Anita Sarkeesian—who examines the problematic representation of women in popular culture through her YouTube series Tropes vs Women—also became a target of this campaign of online harassment. Social media sites have been slow to address these issues of harassment. It wasn't until 2016 that Twitter allowed users to mute posts based on hashtags, emojis and keywords.

GENERATION LIKE

Generation Like (2014), a documentary produced by Douglas Rushkoff and the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS®), explores the corporations and economic structures that underpin social networking. Rushkoff produced a documentary called *Merchants of Cool* (2001), which explains how large corporations like MTV were profiting from teenage culture, exploiting kids' desire to be cool. Social media has changed this dynamic and teenagers now control much of this discourse. Rushkoff argued that likes, shares and retweets are the social currency of 'Generation Like'. What people like and share online becomes part of their social identity.

The documentary points out that young people have always wanted attention and validation and internet fame has become a way to attain social currency. It also looks at how social marketing firms use social media to orchestrate publicity campaigns where the audience advertises content for them.

In the documentary, Jane Buckingham, president of trend-forecasting company Trendera™, points out that consumers are now taking on the role of marketers by promoting products to each other. The documentary argues that, for Generation Like, abandoning your core values or ethos in return for corporate sponsorship isn't a concern. Receiving sponsorship from a corporation is seen as an endorsement or indication that you have achieved success.

> Kids take the very marketing techniques that have been used on them and use them on one another, all in pursuit of the same prize. It's the paradox of Generation Like. These kids are empowered to express themselves as never before but with tools that are embedded with values of their own.

Learning activities

1 Watch the documentary *Generation Like*.

2 Describe three ways that teenagers may use social networking to their advantage.

3 Describe three ways that teenagers might be exploited by large businesses in the course of their social networking activities.

SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVISM

Social media represents considerable promise when it comes to achieving social change. The accessibility and immediacy of communication means that it is easier than ever to spread information about social issues and mobilise support for important causes.

Critics have argued that blogs and social networking websites might not be the best way to mobilise support for important social and political causes. Traditional forms of activism, such as writing to elected officials or conducting demonstrations, are usually more effective than simply joining groups on social networking websites or posting on a blog. While this may indicate support for a cause, it is not necessarily the most effective way to achieve social change. For this reason, activism through social media has been dubbed 'slacktivism'.

Athina Karatzogianni, a lecturer at the University of Leicester, is more optimistic about the impact of social media on activism:

> Digital activism has transformed political protest in the last two decades. Smartphones and the internet have changed the way political events, protests and movements are organised, helping to mobilise thousands of new supporters to a diverse range of causes. With such activity becoming an everyday occurrence, new forms of digital activism are now emerging. These often bypass the existing world of politics, social movements and campaigning. Instead, they take advantage of new technologies to provide an alternative way of organising society and the economy.

A SHORT HISTORY OF SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVISM

- Arab Spring: In 2009, members of the Iranian democratic movement embraced Twitter as a platform to share information and communicate with the outside world. Thousands of users across the globe gave their avatars a green overlay to signify their support for the democratic movement.

- SOPA: In 2012, the *Stop Online Piracy Act* (SOPA) was due to be introduced to the United States Congress. The proposed laws were perceived to threaten freedom of speech and freedom of expression on the internet. Prominent websites including Wikipedia, Reddit and Google went dark for twenty-four hours to protest the

legislation. Millions of people contacted their local representatives and the United States Congress to express their opposition to the bill. A petition ran by Google attracted 4.5 million signatures. The bill was subsequently abandoned.

- Kony 2012: Kony 2012 (see Figure 2.3.3) is an online video created by a group of activists aiming to have Ugandan war criminal Joseph Kony arrested. Kony is the leader of a guerrilla organisation called the Lord's Resistance Army, which is responsible for crimes including rape, murder, kidnapping and the forced recruitment of child soldiers. The video was a phenomenal viral success. In less than a week, it was viewed more than twenty-five million times, throwing the international spotlight on Joseph Kony.

FIGURE 2.3.4 US citizens protesting in support of the Black Lives Matter campaign

- Black Lives Matter: In 2013, the hashtag 'blacklivesmatter' started on Twitter in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman who shot and killed unarmed African-American teenager Trayvon Martin after an altercation in a gated community (see Figure 2.3.4). In 2014, the hashtag drew considerable attention to the fatal shooting of young African-American man Michael Brown by a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri. Its use across social networks fuelled the protests that ensued.

Learning activities

1 Have you ever used social networking websites to spread or support a social or political message?

2 How effective do you think social networking websites are as agents of social and political change?

FIGURE 2.3.3 Young people pasting up a billboard of the Kony 2012 campaign

2.4 Data and change

The rise of the internet means that vast collections of data are now held by governments, corporations and other organisations. The existence of this data has challenged privacy, questioned the ethical responsibilities of corporations, undermined the authority of governments and provided another avenue of social change with the advent of 'hacktivism'.

DATA MINING

The data held by corporations and governments includes massive amounts of information about users, such as their names, addresses, friends, family, browsing histories and spending habits.

Many governments and city councils around the world are making the vast amounts of data that they collect and store available to the public via the internet. The purpose of making this data available is twofold. First, it aims to increase the transparency and accountability of government bodies. Second, it gives ordinary people the opportunity to use this information in new and creative ways.

In 2013, the Australian Government launched the website data.gov.au. The site aims to provide Australians with access to public databases that can be used to develop tools that will improve the lives of its citizens. It provides access to over 23 000 databases that include datasets on a range of topics, such as airport traffic data, recycling collection, energy ratings, electoral boundaries and the location of public toilets. The hope is that access to this information will empower people to create their own sites and apps that make use of this data in creative ways to the benefit of others.

MASS SURVEILLANCE

The internet, social media and mobile devices have created new opportunities for governments to monitor their citizens. Countries like the USA and the United Kingdom are using these technologies to monitor their citizens in an attempt to prevent terrorism and other crimes. Their governments store and monitor all communications, including text messages, emails and telephone calls.

In 2013, by Edward Snowden (see Figure 2.4.1), a former employee of both the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and National Security Agency (NSA), leaked thousands of classified documents to the media revealing the extent of the US Government's global surveillance programs.

The documents showed that the NSA harvests and stores massive amounts of information from around the world, including emails, videos, photos, and social networking information. According to Glen Greenwald, a journalist with *The Guardian* newspaper who helped to break the story, even low-level analysts and contractors within the NSA can access this information without a search warrant.

FIGURE 2.4.1 Whistleblower Edward Snowden revealed the extent of the US Government's mass surveillance program.

The NSA can collect information not only about suspects but also anyone considered to be 'three hops' from their target. Given that the average Facebook user has 190 friends, this means the NSA can keep under surveillance the 5 million people in their extended network.

According to Snowden, even encrypted data is not safe. The NSA has cracked much of the encryption people use on a day-to-day basis and it is permitted to store all enciphered communication until it can be cracked, even if a person has not committed a crime.

The NSA has also developed the technology to record every single telephone call in a foreign country and store that information for thirty days. Although the program, codenamed MYSTIC, was initially used to monitor a single country, there are reports that the government is expanding its reach.

Advocates of mass surveillance point out the need to monitor and stop potential terrorist activities. Civil libertarians argue that this sort of surveillance, which occurs despite any proof of guilt, is a violation of privacy. They argue that politicians, law enforcement, government employees or even hackers could abuse this information.

CITIZENFOUR

Citizenfour (2014) is an Academy Award–winning documentary by Laura Poitras. The documentary is based around an exclusive interview with Edward Snowden prior to the release of his evidence about the NSA's mass surveillance program. Snowden invited Poitras and *The Guardian* journalist Glenn Greenwald to a hotel room in Hong Kong as the story was released to the press. The interview with Snowden was conducted as the story broke across the world. Before his passport was cancelled, Snowden fled to Moscow and was ultimately granted asylum in Russia. In the documentary, Snowden claimed that the surveillance program run by the NSA was one of the biggest weapons of oppression in the history of humankind.

Learning activities

1 Watch the documentary *Citizenfour*.

2 Make a list of the surveillance techniques used by governments to monitor their citizens.

3 With a partner, describe the advantages and disadvantages of this form of mass surveillance.

WIKILEAKS

WikiLeaks is a non-profit website that publishes leaked documents from governments and corporations from whistleblowers within these organisations. The website features a searchable database of these documents that includes diplomatic communications, political emails and military documents. The site has been involved in a number of high-profile leaks, notably those of US soldier, Chelsea Manning, who leaked almost 500 000 documents related to the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. In 2010, the website released classified footage from the Iraq War in which a US Apache helicopter opens fire on two Reuters journalists whose cameras were mistakenly identified as guns.

WikiLeaks has been both praised and condemned for the publication of these documents. Those who praised it maintained that the site has increased government accountability and shed light on illegal and dubious activity. Those who condemned it argued that the American public and American military personnel were placed at risk.

The media landscape is changing, allowing whistleblowers to release massive amounts of information directly and anonymously to the public. WikiLeaks has worked with

FIGURE 2.4.2 A masked hacker, part of the Anonymous group, hacks the French presidential Elysée Palace website on 20 January 2012.

traditional print publications, including *The Guardian* and *The New York Times*, to analyse, curate and coordinate the release of secret documents. According to the site's cofounder Daniel Domscheit-Berg, WikiLeaks has published more confidential information since its inception than *The Washington Post* has in the last thirty years. New technology—including state-of-the-art encryption, peer-to-peer file sharing, restricted mailing lists, memory sticks, VPN tunnels and the internet itself—is at the heart of these changes, making it possible for whistleblowers, WikiLeaks and newspapers to release this information.

HACKTIVISM

Online communities of hackers have started to disrupt mainstream media, governments and corporations by compromising servers and hacking data. 'Anonymous' is the most notable network of hackers. A loose collective without central leadership or direction, the group has instigated a number of high-profile hacks on organisations such as The Church of Scientology, Westboro Baptist Church and Sony. An offshoot of Anonymous, Ghost Patrol, has started targeting ISIS websites and online accounts. Anonymous frequently posts videos online in which members wear Guy Fawkes masks from the film *V for Vendetta* (2005). Anonymous frequently uses 'denial of service attacks' in which websites are temporarily taken down by large amounts of traffic. These tactics mirror traditional campaigns of civil disobedience to bring public attention to causes the organisation sees as important.

2.5 Creativity and change

New media technology has opened up enormous potential for creativity and creation. Creating media products, such as films or video games, was traditionally only possible if you had access to equipment that was expensive and difficult to use. Over the last decade, there has been a significant shift in the production of mass media since the invention of moveable type.

THE CREATIVE REVOLUTION

For several hundred years, the ability to publish and broadcast has largely been in the hands of the wealthy. Now, with little more than a smartphone and internet connection, you can share your work with millions of people. While many regard the democratisation of media as a cultural revolution, some worry about its impact on the very nature of creativity and art.

This creative revolution was sparked by the development of Web 2.0. Web 2.0 is a phrase invented by writer Tim O'Reilly that describes the way the internet has evolved to incorporate greater interactivity, socialisation and user-generated content. In the early days of the internet, websites were typically static and lacked interactivity. The arrival of blogs, wikis and sites such as YouTube and Facebook gave ordinary people the freedom to create and distribute their own media texts.

Media theorist Henry Jenkins has dubbed this 'participatory culture'. According to Jenkins, participatory culture is an environment in which there are few barriers to artistic expression and the creation of content. People work together in a collaborative and supportive environment where they share knowledge and skills and value the contributions of others.

Technology, according to Jenkins, is simply a tool. While it makes certain creative endeavours possible, these will only become widespread if the culture supports it. He argues that many young people are already involved in participatory culture through their affiliation with online communities, the creation of new media products and collaborations via new media.

Learning activities

1 Make a list of the technology that you have access to and can draw upon to create your own media.

2 Describe the different types of media that you create and share.

THE RISE OF YOUTUBE

While traditional media organisations have struggled to make sense of the new digital landscape, ordinary people have been quick to adopt new technologies to create, collaborate, publish, share and monetise their work. YouTube provides an outlet for lesser known filmmakers, musicians and comedians who want to share their work with a large audience.

In 2006, the Sydney-based band Sick Puppies received global attention when the video clip for their song 'All the Same' became a viral hit on YouTube. The clip featured footage of the lead singer's friend Juan Mann offering free hugs to strangers in a busy Sydney shopping strip. The video was featured on *Good Morning America* and has received over 65 million views on YouTube.

Through its affiliate program, YouTube has allowed creators to monetise their videos and profit from views. This has been very profitable for some independent filmmakers and artists. Natalie Tran, who publishes videos under the name communitychannel, is one of the most prominent Australian vloggers on YouTube. She produces short, humorous videos about her day-to-day life, often playing multiple characters. By 2017, her videos had received over 500 million views. Jenna Marbles is an American vlogger. Her vlogs are comedic and are about being a millennial woman. By 2017 she had amassed over 17.5 million subscribers and 2.45 billion views.

SHORT VIDEO GENRES

The development of online video-sharing sites like YouTube and Facebook has seen the development of a whole range of new, short-form video genres that carry their own conventions.

- vlogs: A 'vlog' or 'video blog' is traditionally an unscripted, direct-to-camera confessional in which someone talks about their life, an issue or idea that is important to them. Given that they are unscripted, vlogs usually make liberal use of jump cuts without making any attempt to cover up these abrupt transitions.

- sketches: Given the typical length of YouTube videos, it has become an ideal platform for sharing sketch comedy. Channels like College Humor, Annoying Orange and Charlieissocoollike demonstrate the popularity of this content.

- fail videos: YouTube quickly became a place where people could upload short, humorous videos captured on smartphones. Similar to the success of sketch comedy on YouTube, these short videos are often compiled into 'fail' compilations.

- how-to videos: In 2015, Google revealed that searches for how-to videos on YouTube had increased by seventy per cent. Given its visual nature and tendency towards brief, concise content, the platform has proven effective at delivering everything from home improvement videos to software tutorials.

- product reviews: YouTube has also become a popular source of product reviews. There are channels dedicated to reviewing all sorts of products from tech gear to knitting patterns. According to a 2014 report by Pixability, YouTube is where people go before purchasing consumer electronics. At that time, consumer electronic reviews had amassed 18.9 billion views.

- unboxing videos: Unboxing videos have proven extremely popular on video-sharing sites. These videos typically involve people unboxing new products, such as smartphones, while exploring their features and discussing the product.

One of the key similarities between all of these genres and styles is that they frequently conclude with a request that viewers like and share the video and subscribe to the channel. Creators will often respond to and incorporate user feedback into the videos.

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other social networking platforms have enabled creatives and artists to communicate directly with their followers and build their fan base.

Learning activity

Create a two-minute video about a form of new media technology using one of the following formats: vlog, sketch, how-to video or product review.

CROWDFUNDING

Crowdfunding websites such as Kickstarter, Indigogo®, Pozible and Patreon™ have allowed individuals to raise money for their creative projects, such as books, albums, artwork or even inventions. Some prominent crowdfunding success stories include:

- *Veronica Mars* (see Figure 2.5.1): Rob Thomas, the showrunner of the television program *Veronica Mars*, took his idea for a cinematic spinoff to Kickstarter. It took less than 11 hours to raise the US$2 million dollars needed to make the film, which was subsequently released both in cinemas and via video-on-demand services.

FIGURE 2.5.1 Movie poster for *Veronica Mars* (2014)

- Exploding Kittens: An amusing card game developed by Elan Lee and The Oatmeal's Matthew Inman raised over US$8 million and was backed by over 200 000 people. The fundraising campaign became one of the largest in Kickstarter's history.

- TableTop: TableTop is a web series developed by Wil Wheaton and Felicia Day. The series focuses on a different tabletop board game every episode, following a group of celebrities as they explain the rules and play the game. The team behind the web series turned to crowdfunding website Indigogo to fund the third season, raising almost US$1.5 million to create a series of twenty episodes and a new series focusing on role-playing games.

In 2013, Patreon ushered in a new model of crowdfunding. Rather than focusing on raising funds for a particular project, Patreon focused on allowing creative people to develop a sustainable income from their content. People who fund an artist through Patreon agree to pay a small fee on a monthly basis or every time the artist releases a new piece of work. The site has become popular with musicians, podcasters, video essayists and comic artists with established fan bases.

2.6 The rise of digital filmmaking

The development of digital filmmaking and the declining cost of equipment has significantly changed the filmmaking industry and opened up new opportunities for independent filmmakers.

CELLULOID VERSUS DIGITAL

Hollywood filmmakers are divided over the quality of digital film. While filmmakers like George Lucas (*Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith* 2005) and Robert Rodriguez (*Sin City* 2005, *Planet Terror* 2007) are excited about the prospect, traditionalists like Christopher Nolan (*Batman Begins* 2005, *Interstellar* 2014) maintain that celluloid film is superior in quality.

> *Side by Side* (2012) is a documentary by Chris Kenneally examining the development of digital filmmaking and the future of celluloid. In the documentary, Christopher Nolan explains that he is constantly asked to justify why he continues using film. His cinematographer, Wally Pfister, comments that he is unlikely to trade his oil paints for a packet of crayons. Director Robert Rodriguez, who made *Sin City* and *Planet Terror*, argues that the quality of digital technology will only increase and that filmmakers need to guide the direction of this new technology.

It is difficult to deny that digital film has changed the filmmaking industry. Digital technology continues to change the way that films are shot. Traditionally, filmmakers would only be able to view the footage after the film had been developed. David Fincher (*Zodiac* 2007, *Gone Girl* 2014) argues that the ability to watch footage as it is being shot is advantageous. Some cinematographers argue that this ability has taken away some of the mystery and authority of their role on set. Many filmmakers and cinematographers have also been critical of the resolution and quality of digital film.

The rise of digital filmmaking has also changed the way films are edited. Although digital editing is now an industry standard, there are still those who think it has affected the way that editors think about their work. The very nature of digital editing means that anything is possible and editors don't necessarily take the time to ponder every cut.

FIGURE 2.6.1 Videographers use a Red Camera in New York.

The development of digital filmmaking means that filmmaking has become more affordable and led to a more efficient workflow. The development of smaller digital cameras gives filmmakers greater freedom and flexibility because they aren't limited by the size of the camera or changing film reels. This allows directors to go for longer periods without stopping. When George Lucas made the *Star Wars* prequels, he wanted to save money by making the entire process digital. *Star Wars: Attack of the Clones* (2002) was shot entirely on an experimental, high-definition digital camera. Robert Rodriguez was another early adopter who saw the benefit of shooting digitally. Recognising the advantages of the digital format also meant that he was able to create an authentic, big screen adaptation of Frank Miller's comic book *Sin City*.

Learning activities

1 Watch the documentary *Side by Side*.

2 As you are watching, make a list of the arguments made about both formats. Share your observations with the class.

3 Create an infographic describing the pros and cons of both traditional celluloid film and digital film.

2.7 The changing face of news and publishing

New media technology is redefining the news industry, destabilising the traditional role that newspapers have played in providing news and opening up a range of new possibilities. News continues to be an important part of the democratic process. Both new and traditional outlets play an important role in providing citizens with information about important social, economic and political issues.

THE DECLINE OF NEWSPAPERS

Since the turn of the century, newspapers have seen a significant decline in circulation and profit, leading some to question how quality journalism will survive in the digital age.

According to a 2016 report conducted by industry research firm IBISWorld, the $4 billion Australian newspaper industry had declined by over 8 per cent in the previous five years.

A key reason for the decline in newspaper profits is sites like eBay®, Craigslist™ and Gumtree™, which have compromised the newspaper industry's traditional reliance on classified advertising. At the same time, many people have turned to digital publications for news. While traditional newspapers have moved online, their owners are still struggling to monetise their online presence. Online advertising is far less profitable than it was in print publications. Some newspapers, like *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Australian*, have instituted pay walls. *The Guardian* has continued to provide content for free but encourages its readers to become 'supporters' for $100 a year.

THE RISE OF CITIZEN JOURNALISM

Social media has redefined the nature of news, allowing both experienced journalists and everyday people to report on events as they happen. The 2013 terrorist bombing of the Boston Marathon was a defining moment for citizen journalism. Social media, particularly sites like Twitter and Reddit, were flooded with information about the event, including eyewitness accounts, photographs and videos. Although this event demonstrated the potential of citizen journalism, it also highlighted how false and misleading information can spread quickly in such situations. Minutes after the bombing, a user on Reddit noted the similarities between the second suspect in the bombing and missing man Sunil Tripathi whose family had started a Facebook page to find him. The story spread from Reddit to Twitter. A month later, his body was discovered after an apparent suicide. Similarly, the *New York Post* published a photograph of a 17-year-old boy and his coach who had been identified as potential suspects on Reddit and the online bulletin board, 4chan™. Events like these demonstrate both the potential of citizen journalism and also the importance of quality journalism.

> In London, after the 2005 bombing on three underground trains and a bus, several hundred photos and around 30 video clips were sent to the BBC. Later, about 70 of these images and five of the clips were used on the BBC website.

INVESTIGATIVE REPORTING

Investigative journalism has always been an important function of traditional news organisations. These journalists take the time and effort to explore important issues such as government corruption and corporate greed by undertaking investigations that might span years. Because it is time consuming and expensive, investigative journalism is threatened by declining newspaper revenue.

DIGITAL DISRUPTION

In 2015, the ABC's *Foreign Correspondent* produced an episode called 'Digital Disruption', which explores the effects that new media technology has on news. Journalist Peter Greste discusses the immense pressure that new technology puts journalists under as they are forced to compete with the immediacy of social media while simultaneously being required to consider the story, check facts, confirm sources and ask further questions. He also claims that the imperative to sensationalise news for 'click-throughs' has led to a decline in the quality of reporting.

FIGURE 2.7.1 ABC journalist Sophie McNeil suggests that advances in filmmaking technology have given her news stories more of a documentary feel.

Advances in technology means that foreign correspondents often take responsibility for every aspect of production, including interviews, shooting, lighting, sound and editing. Journalist, Sophie McNeil explains that this has given her reporting a more documentary feel. 'Cynical people will tell you that we are only doing it this way because of budget reasons, and it is true that the ABC received large budget cuts and we had to look at how to do things differently,' she said. 'But I've been a video journalist for over ten years now and I really like the style of storytelling. I like the way you get close to people, you hang out with people, you get a behind-the-scenes feel, a more documentary style than you would get with a regular crew.' The speed of new technology means that stories can be filmed and edited in a short period of time and broadcast in Australia shortly thereafter.

> David O'Shea from SBS's *Dateline* says one of the advantages of being a video journalist is the 'freedom of working alone' while one of the disadvantages is that there is no one 'watching your back'. He notes that when reporting demonstrations, video journalists need to be fully aware of their surroundings and hyper-sensitive to the mood of the crowd and the police.

VIRAL NEWS AND CLICKBAIT

In the new media landscape, the news stories that succeed and spread are those that attract click-throughs, often through sensational subject matter or outrageous headlines.

BuzzFeed™ is a site specialising in viral content—articles, videos, photographs and quizzes that spread quickly online. Stories are traditionally sensationalist or have some kind of hook that inspires readers to click through to the content. In recent years, the site has invested heavily in serious reporting and journalism. Nevertheless, it has received criticism for plagiarism, copyright infringement and sponsored content.

Journalists are divided about this style of reporting. Some argue that the ability to write a snappy headline and engaging introduction has always been relevant to journalists. Others like Ken Smith in an article titled 'Clickbait: The changing face of online journalism', argues that some fear it might lead to a dumbing down of content as click-throughs shape the content of online newspapers, leading to an emphasis on trivial stories as opposed to serious reporting.

THE PODCASTING REVOLUTION

Podcasting developed as a way to distribute content, principally audio programs, over the internet for playback on portable media devices. The term is a combination of the words iPod and broadcasting. Similar in style to traditional radio programs, podcasts are distributed by RSS feeds, which automatically download new episodes when they are released. The form experienced increased popularity when Apple added podcasts to iTunes. Traditional news organisations such as the ABC and the BBC were quick to release their content via podcasts. Although the number of independent podcasts proliferated, many argue that the form started to mature upon the release of Serial (see Figure 2.7.2), a non-fiction podcast exploring true crimes. The first season of Serial explored the 1999 murder of an 18-year-old high-school student from Baltimore. The program quickly climbed the charts on iTunes and received a 2015 Peabody award for its service to American radio.

Thanks to the success of highly publicised podcasts like Serial and This American Life, the audience for podcasting continues to grow. According to The Pew Research Centre, by 2016 over one-fifth of Americans had listened to a podcast in the last month. Without the constraints of advertising and time slots, podcasts are free to focus on story. Serial has been praised for its engaging, long-form storytelling. Critics of the program suggest that its personal style and use of fictional narrative techniques, such as cliffhangers, means that it is very different from traditional, objective reporting. The success of Serial also sparked other cold case, true crime stories told in this style, including The Jinx (HBO™), which explored the involvement of real-estate scion Robert Durst in several murders, and Netflix's Making a Murderer, which looked at the wrongful conviction and subsequent accusations against Manitowoc County resident Steven Avery.

The popularity of these programs has led to a new trend in crime reporting, a combination of traditional documentary and a binge-worthy drama, peppered with clues, red herrings and cliffhangers. Brian McNair, Professor of Journalism, Media and Communication at Queensland University of Technology, has labelled this new form 'factuality'.

> Factuality can be defined as fact-based content which has much in common with investigative and other forms of journalism, but strongly features elements of narrative drama, soap opera, and other fictional formats such as cliff-hanging endings, unexpected plot twists and jaw-dropping moments of revelation.
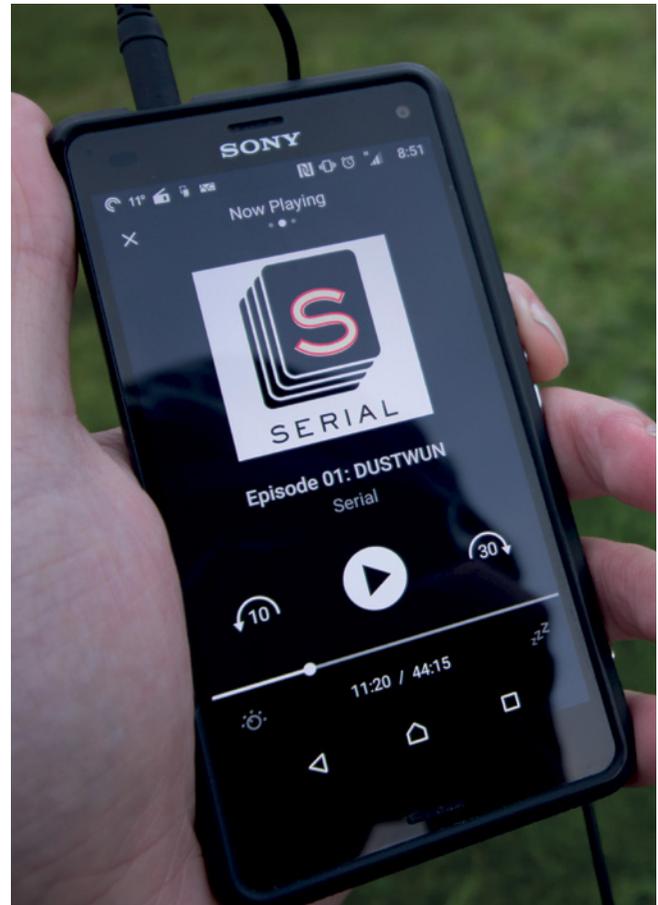
FIGURE 2.7.2 The podcast, Serial

Learning activity

Record an audio or video vox pop with members of your school community during which you ask two questions: 'Where do you get your news?' and 'Does good journalism matter?' Edit your video or audio into a segment and share it with your class.

BOOK PUBLISHING AND CHANGE

TABLETS AND E-BOOKS

The emergence of tablet computers and e-book readers, such as the Amazon Kindle and Apple iPad, is influencing the way that content is distributed and consumed (see Figure 2.7.3).

The arrival of tablet computing is seen by some as the saviour of magazines and newspapers whose circulations have been in decline over the last decade. Publications like *Wired* and *Rolling Stone* have created content for the iPad, incorporating interactive elements such as video and audio into traditional written and photographic content.

FIGURE 2.7.3 E-book readers have changed the way books are sold, distributed and consumed.

Project Gutenberg, a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to providing out-of-copyright texts in digital and e-book format, was established in 1971. Through the aid of Project Gutenberg volunteers and sponsors, over 33 000 free e-books have been created for download onto all major e-book readers. Consumers are also able to buy a range of contemporary novels online for their e-book devices.

In July 2009, Amazon Kindle users who purchased George Orwell's *1984* and *Animal Farm* were surprised to discover that the titles had been deleted from their devices. Amazon decided to remove the novels from devices and retract their sale in e-book format after discovering the books being distributed were illegal copies. After they were severely criticised for the move and, ironically, compared to the totalitarian government portrayed in *1984*, Amazon offered customers a refund or credit for their purchase, or the return of their e-books.

Although e-books have been available for over a decade, the increasing popularity and development of e-book readers and tablet computing has contributed to e-books becoming a more convenient and accessible way to read texts. The technology behind e-book devices has improved to incorporate more user-friendly reading formats, and the spread of the internet has allowed for greater transfer of electronic files.

ALTERNATIVE PATHS TO PRINT

In 2015, author Gary Whitta who wrote the screenplay for *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story* (2016) crowdfunded his historical fantasy novel *Abomination* on the publishing site Inkshares. Adopting a similar model to sites like Kickstarter and Pozible, the site allows authors to crowdfund a project. When sufficient funds are raised, the company takes responsibility for editing, producing, distributing, marketing and publishing printed copies of the novel.

The internet also makes it possible for unpublished writers to share their stories and develop their craft by joining online communities. These communities offer new ways for writers to share and receive feedback on their work. Sites like National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo™) encourage users to write an entire novel in one month. Others, such as the Reddit Writer's Group, are communities that provide inspiration and encouragement.

2.8 The future of television

One of the defining media technologies of the twentieth century, the television industry, is undergoing huge changes. New media technology is disrupting the content and distribution of what we have traditionally consumed on the small screen.

STREAMING SERVICES

The development of streaming services such as Netflix, Stan and Amazon Prime™ has fundamentally changed the way that we consume television. Traditional broadcast television gained revenue from advertising. Television programs were a way to deliver audiences to advertisers. In many ways, the nature of broadcast television and advertising shaped the content of programs. Television dramas were written to fit into 45-minute time slots. The three-act structure of episodes was punctuated with cliffhangers preceding ad breaks to ensure that viewers didn't channel surf. During the reign of broadcast television, episode dramas and situation comedies were popular, since they didn't require audiences to tune in every week. The introduction of streaming services has disrupted these long-established storytelling conventions, allowing programs to tell complex, long-form stories that would lose an audience if they were broadcast in a weekly time slot. In a 2013 speech, actor Kevin Spacey (*House of Cards*) explained why these services are changing the face of television (see Figure 2.8.1).

Streaming services are subverting the traditional model of asking producers to create expensive pilots, instead focusing on developing an entire series that will engage their subscribers. During his speech, Spacey pointed out that these new services are giving audiences what they want, the ability to 'binge' and lose themselves in a series.

In the coming years, Spacey predicts that the difference between films, television and online content will dissolve, but the audience's love for story will remain.

Learning activity

The Golden Age of Television, which many argued began in the early 2000s, is characterised by cinematic visuals and engaging storytelling. Select a scene from a television program that you like and, in the form of a video essay, answer the following questions:

- What is the Golden Age of Television?
- What makes this program and this scene an effective example of modern television?
- What cinematic codes and storytelling conventions make this scene engaging?

FIGURE 2.8.1 Kevin Spacey at The Guardian Edinburgh International Television Festival in 2013

2.9 | Video games

In the last two decades, video games have become a mainstream form of media. According to the NewZoo Global Games Market Report, the video games industry generated US$99.6 billion in 2016. The availability of a variety of gaming platforms, such as game consoles, handheld devices and online games, has contributed to the popularity of video gaming in the home.

VIDEO GAME NARRATIVES

Modern video games often have sprawling and sophisticated narratives. Novels have always allowed readers to explore elaborate worlds and video games have the potential to offer the same level of complexity in an immersive and non-linear style. Sandbox games, such as Fallout 4™ and Farcry 4™, allow players to choose their own direction by exploring an immense number of subplots and side missions set within the parameters the developers have created. Games like the immensely popular Minecraft™ have few rules at all—allowing players to explore and create with few boundaries.

Critics of video games cite extended and immersive game play as a reason for concern. Players can engross themselves in a game for hours and even days on end, raising fears of unhealthy and obsessive use. Some psychiatrists and doctors have suggested that video game obsession is as powerful as drug addiction, but video game manufacturers maintain that extended game play is no more harmful than reading a book or watching television for long periods of time.

ONLINE GAMES

As internet speeds have increased, online gaming has become a more popular pastime. Console games often incorporate significant elements of online play. Many games not only encourage but necessitate effective cooperation with other players to survive campaigns. While players often communicate during the game via text chat, it is more common for them to talk to each other using headsets.

One of the most significant developments in online gaming has been the rise of massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs), which allow thousands of players to interact in the same virtual world. Popular MMORPGs include World of Warcraft™, EVE Online™, Neverwinter™, Elderscrolls Online™ and Guild Wars 2™. World of Warcraft is the most prominent and long-running

MMORPG and had approximately 5.6 million subscribers in 2015. Players create a character who acquires skills and advances through the game by completing quests and exploring its virtual worlds. The game encourages interaction between players by requiring the formation of teams to fight their way through scenarios and engage in player-versus-player combat.

VIDEO GAMES AND VIOLENCE

Video games are often criticised for their depiction of violence. It is argued that the immersive and interactive nature of video games means they are more likely to encourage violent and aggressive behaviour in the real world.

In his article 'Reality bytes: Eight myths about video games debunked' professor and media scholar Henry Jenkins seeks to dispel myths surrounding video game violence. He points out that despite their proliferation, juvenile violence in the USA was at a thirty-year low in the early 2000s. In 2010, US psychologist Christopher Ferguson conducted a study of research into video game violence. He found, once the studies were adjusted for publication bias, that there was little evidence to suggest that violent video games contribute to real-world aggression and violence.

These findings are at odds with the research of US psychologist Craig Anderson, whose 2001 study found that children who play violent video games are more likely to engage in aggressive play. Likewise, Lieutenant Colonel David Grossman, a former military psychologist, believes that video games are conditioning young people to become killers, pointing out strong parallels between violent video games and the interactive training used by the US military.

While video games such as Grand Theft Auto™ are frequently criticised for their depiction of violence, commentators usually ignore the role this violence plays in a complex and deeply satirical narrative.

FIGURE 2.9.1 Games like Mass Effect: Andromeda challenge representations of gender by allowing players to play as male or female without changing the nature of the character.

In Red Dead Redemption™, players are rewarded for acting morally; it is more financially rewarding to return a wanted criminal alive than dead. In Bioshock™, players are forced to make a series of moral decisions that influence the outcome of the game. Unlike films and novels, in which the audience often criticises the actions of other characters, video games allow the player to question their own behaviour. While the Mass Effect™ games traditionally had a morality system allowing players to make either 'paragon' or 'renegade' decisions to resolve a situation, a more recent instalment in the franchise, Mass Effect: Andromeda™, measures moral decisions in a more nuanced manner, reflecting the trend towards more morally complex games.

GENDER IN VIDEO GAMES

Like any form of new technology, the development of video games has been accompanied by concerns, criticism and moral panic, including claims of the over-sexualisation of women.

Video games have come under scrutiny for their representation of gender roles. In the 1990s, the Tomb Raider™ franchise was condemned for its representation of women. Although Lara Croft, the main character in the games, is a strong, intelligent and independent woman, critics of the franchise have accused her of being a highly sexualised male fantasy figure. Although these sorts of complaints are often levelled at video games, it is important to remember that similar arguments are made about representations of women in other media forms including films, magazines and television.

Critics suggest that video games are directed at a predominantly male audience and are, therefore, explicitly violent and applaud macho behaviour. However, studies have shown that video games have attracted an increasingly diverse audience in the last decade. According to 2007 marketing research firm Nielsen™, 41 per cent of gamers in Australia are female. The significant interest from female gamers has coincided with a trend towards more complex and multifaceted female characters, such as those shown in games like Mass Effect: Andromeda (see Figure 2.9.1). Many modern video games, particularly role-playing games, also give players a choice of gender, which is something that was almost unheard of a decade ago.

Learning activities

1   Research a female character from a video game and produce a video essay using game-play footage describing their representation in the game.

2   Write a letter to the editor of a newspaper or magazine that expresses your point of view on one of the following statements. Support your argument with evidence.
    - Video games are a major source of violence in modern society.
    - Video game addiction and excessive game play are serious problems.
    - Video games inaccurately portray representations of gender.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

■ Forms of new media have significant creative and cultural implications.

■ New media forms arise through the development and convergence of different media technologies.

■ Since the development of the printing press and the birth of the mass media, new media technologies have contributed to changing the way that people communicate and interact with each other.

■ The development of new media is usually accompanied by anxiety and moral panic over its potential effects on audiences.

■ New media technologies that make it easier to copy music, films and television programs are challenging traditional copyright laws.

■ In recent decades, the mass media has become far more participatory, putting greater power in the hands of ordinary people.

■ New media technologies such as blogs, wikis and social networking websites have resulted in a number of social changes, particularly regarding content creation, distribution and authenticity, and ideals surrounding privacy.

■ New media technologies can have both positive and negative effects on audiences.

ASSESSMENT TASK

Choose a form of new media that you are interested in (e.g. digital music, social networking websites, blogs, tablet computers, e-book readers, smartphones, video games) and conduct some research to find out more about the changes it has instigated. To ensure that your research is relevant and up to date, use a search engine to find articles about this new form of technology that have been published within the last two years.

Using the findings from your research, create a short documentary or podcast episode.
Your media product will:

• describe the characteristics of the new media form

• outline the positive and negative implications of the new media form, including its implications for the audience, society, economy, industry, government, culture and ethics

• describe how the new media form influences the way people communicate with each other and their consumption of media texts

• predict the direction the new media will take in the near future.

3 Investigating narrative

Narrative is the glue that binds together media products. A narrative can exist within a single production such as a video or photograph, or across a number of pieces such as a photographic series. How these products are constructed and how the content is arranged and revealed is all related to narrative and storytelling.

Story is your enemy. Story will sink you. Conversely, in a movie, if you don't have a story, that will sink you.

Tina Fey, Screenwriter and actor

This chapter explores how a narrative and story can be told; how style, story and genre work together; how different media forms tell stories in their own way; and how style is created by the individual or team producing the media product. In this context, 'narrative' is used as a general term and 'story' is used when discussing a specific narrative form.

Day for Night (1973)

3.1 Narratives

People live with stories—from television, films, video games, online readings and viewings they consume in the evening to a novel in bed before they turn out the light.

NARRATIVE AND STORY

There is a distinction between narrative and story, even though the two words are used interchangeably. At its most basic, a narrative is a series of events and a story describes how those events are arranged; that is, a story has elements such as character, and a beginning, middle and end.

Narratives and stories surround everyone and are encountered constantly throughout daily life. People live with stories—from newspapers, radio and television in the morning to encounters throughout the day at school or work and even the various forms of advertising that people consume while travelling. People receive stories via print, audio and visual productions.

The way narratives are formed into stories may change as well as the way they are told. A film tells a story in a different way to a book and video games create a story in a different way to a television show, but all contain the essential characteristics of storytelling. Even forms not immediately associated with storytelling, such as the television news, arrange and structure their pieces to construct a narrative. They are called news stories for a reason.

The essential elements of a story are quite simple. First of all, a story needs a structure and this is usually a beginning, a middle and an end. A story also needs a purpose, intention (or reason for being told) and an audience.

French filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard is famous for saying that his films always had a beginning, a middle and an end, except that he did not necessarily arrange them in that order. Godard's intention was to disrupt his viewers' expectations of a story and of their traditional viewing patterns. By playing with the audience's ideas of story, Godard's films often reinforced people's need or desire to be able to read a text as a story.
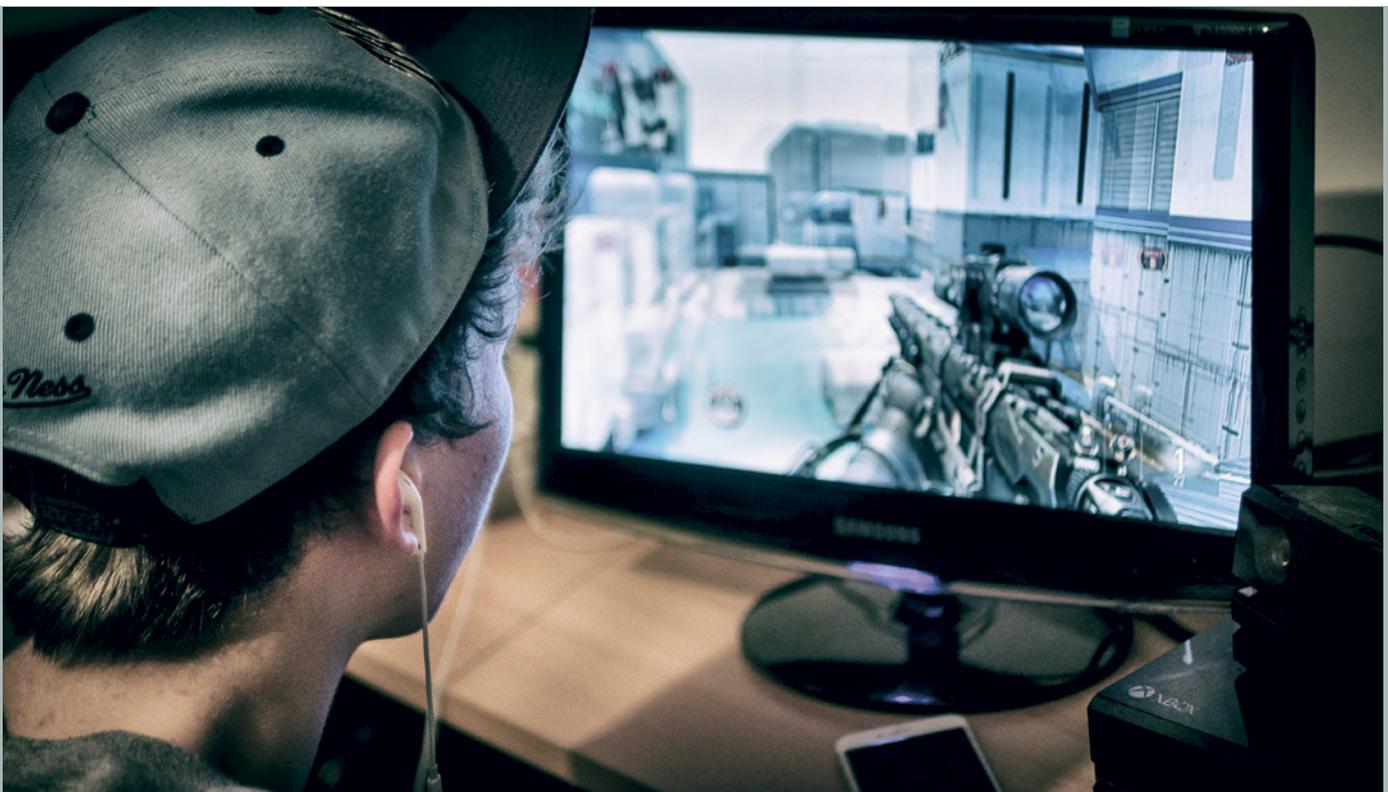
FIGURE 3.1.1 Call of Duty™ video game. Narratives can be delivered in a variety of ways and read by a variety of audiences.

The basic structural elements of a story will be essentially the same across the different mediums. The core elements of a narrative will stay the same in a book, a film, a television show, a play, a photographic essay and other mediums. However, the medium may cause the story elements to be arranged differently.

Much of the writing on narrative and story seems obvious when looking at what appear to be the 'natural' storytelling mediums of film and television, but it also applies to other mediums. In photography, a story can be told within the frame of a single image or across multiple frames or images in a photographic essay or photojournalist shoot. In print, apart from the obvious written stories in a magazine, the form of a magazine tells a story in itself. There is a narrative structure to a magazine that takes the reader on a journey through its pages. Graphic novels and zines also have an overarching structure in addition to the storytelling codes and conventions of the narratives told within its pages.

> The term 'narrative' is often used interchangeably with the term 'story' and, while it is usually acceptable to do this, there is a difference between story and narrative at a more academic level. Narrative is the overall term, and story and plot combine to form a narrative. The story contains the story elements such as character, time and space and the plot is the way the story elements are arranged.
>
> The best way to think of this is that the story is how you would describe a film, play, book or so on to someone who had not yet seen it. Generally, the story would described what happened in chronological order, along the lines of: 'There was a private detective who had been hired to look for an old girlfriend by her husband'.
>
> The plot is how the story is told and can include flashbacks, flash-forwards and voice-over narration. In the case of the private detective example, the film might start with a flashback of the private detective with a voice-over showing him breaking up with a girl years ago, then a flash-forward to the present and the girl's husband entering the detective's office.
>
> The essential difference is that the story is *what* is told and the plot is *how* it is told.

NARRATIVE ESSENTIALS

AUDIENCE

An audience is fairly necessary to the storytelling process. A story is usually constructed for a particular audience and this audience and their expectations in turn will influence the structure of the story.

An audience rarely comes to or views a work or text with no expectations. Audience's expectations can be based on their previous experiences with the medium or form or with the genre of the story, or may even be based on their expectations associated with the particular actors, directors, photographers, artists or publishers. Just knowing that a comic is published by Marvel™ or DC™ brings with it a host of expectations.

At the most basic level, the audience expects a story to be established, for events to happen and for there to be a resolution.

> If an audience is essential for a story to exist, can the teller also be the audience? Or is a story without an audience merely a daydream?

SELF-REFLEXIVE FILM

A self-reflexive film is a film about filmmaking, creativity, audiences and the conflict between creative expression and commercial interests. Jean-Luc Godard's 1963 film *Le Mépris* (*Contempt*) seen in Figure 3.1.2 is a film about a film being made. Many of the roles in the film being made within *Le Mépris* are played by people who had that role in real life; for example, the fictional director in the film was played by Fritz Lang, himself a famous director.

FIGURE 3.1.2 Jean-Luc Godard's *Le Mépris* (*Contempt*) (1963) is a self-reflexive film.

STRUCTURE

The structure of a story is very dependent on the medium it is told through. A basic story structure contains a beginning where the story/journey commences, a middle where the story unfolds, and an end where the story concludes or is resolved.

Some mediums explicitly show audiences each of these stages with quite clear delineations. In other mediums, these stages may be inferred or left for the audience to construct. For example, with a single photographic image, a viewer can see the initial situation, create a backstory, infer how the story will unfold, and create a resolution.

IN MEDIA RES

Generally media stories start *in media res*, which is Latin for 'in the middle of things'; that is, audiences come into an existing situation, which then unfolds and develops over the course of the story.

Film

In the case of film, the audience arrives assuming that there is a backstory and it is very rare to start the story/film with a character's birth. There are exceptions though: *The World According to Garp* (1982) starts with Garp's conception and ends with his death.

Photography

In Figure 3.1.3, the Iranian photographer Gohar Dashti shows a situation that makes viewers ask questions such as: Who are these people? What has happened? What is happening? What will happen? Viewers are invited to construct a history, a present and a future for the image. The surreal or dreamlike quality of the scene frees the viewer from having to 'understand' it in a realistic or logical way; viewers can also see it as meaning something on a symbolic level. This image also illustrates how a story does not have to relate to realism but can reflect a code that viewers also use when attempting to create meaning in the reading of a story.

STORY, STYLE AND GENRE

Once the basics of what a story is are understood, how the story is told needs to be examined. Each medium has its own styles and genres. 'Style' can be defined as the approach that is taken by an individual or collective's creative decisions when telling the story. One way of looking at this is that the story may be considered like a recipe—the story elements are the ingredients and the style is how the cook or chef puts the ingredients together.

FIGURE 3.1.3 Gohar Dashti, Untitled from the series, 'Stateless' (2014–2015)

FIGURES 3.1.4 AND 3.1.5 *Hail Caesar* (2016) [left] and *Fargo* (1996) [right] show how the Coen brothers have explored different genres.

Another way is to consider a song by one artist that is covered by another artist—the words and tune will be the same, but how they are arranged is a result of creative decisions by the covering artist—that is, their style.

Genre is a French word meaning 'type' or 'kind' and, when used in English, typically denotes a category of media product. Genre can be seen as part of an industrial or institutional type of production. Filmmakers, photographers and other artists can, and usually do, have a distinctive style, but they can also work within a genre. Genre can feel quite restrictive sometimes to a writer but those constraints can be very satisfying to an audience. Genre can also be played with, referenced and used out of context to surprise and engage an audience on a number of different levels.

The Coen brothers' films are a good example of filmmakers playing with genre and they bring their own distinctive style to a number of different genres, as illustrated in the films *Hail Caesar* (2016) (see Figure 3.1.4) and *Fargo* (1996) (see Figure 3.1.5).

Both style and genre also play a large part in the expectations an audience has when they approach a film, a print product or other media texts. Filmgoers often talk of seeing the new Wes Anderson film or that latest action film. Both style and genre codes and conventions shape the story and the way it unfolds and is read by an audience.

Learning activities

1   What are the essentials to telling a story?

2   Explain the importance of an audience.

3   Look at Figure 3.1.3. Using no more than five sentences, create a story centring on the photo. What medium would you use and what genre might it fall under?

4   Look at the following scenarios for the beginning of a film. Using your knowledge of genre convention, add two or three lines describing what happens next and how it ends.

- The 'unattractive' nerdy girl is always being left out and being picked on by the 'cool' group.

- A 'mad' bomber holds the city to ransom. There are only two detectives available to deal with the crisis. One is just about to retire and one is just about to be suspended.

- It is one week before the wedding and an old boyfriend comes back to visit the bride.

- A prisoner is released from prison. He decides to get a team together for one last robbery before he skips the country forever.

3.2 Narrative and story in film and television

In film and television, narratives and stories follow the same pattern as all stories; narratives tell stories and stories consist of a series of events that link together and occur within a logical time in a specific place or space.

NARRATIVE

In his book *Film Art: An Introduction*, David Bordwell provides a basic definition of a narrative as 'a chain of events in cause and effect relationship occurring in time and space'. This definition uncovers the 'spine' of a story and gives a solid foundation upon which to build. A story has, at its core, events that happen and these events are linked together so that one action leads to or causes another action to happen. All this occurs within a logical time in a specific place or space. Bordwell also describes another basic element; that is, who or what is it that causes these events to happen, allowing the story to advance—in other words, character.

STORY AND STRUCTURE

Before creators start writing a story, there are important questions they need to be able to answer:

- Why they are telling the story?
- Who are they telling it for and who are they telling it to?
- What and who is their audience?

The answers to these questions will inform the structure of the story. A creator may be communicating a grander theme or idea. It may be: 'love will come', 'bad guys don't prosper', 'revenge is unsatisfying', 'be careful of strangers/welcome strangers' or 'don't build a house on an ancient Indigenous burial site' (which can really mean 'respect other cultures').

THREE-ACT STRUCTURE

Most stories have what is known as a three-act structure: a beginning, a middle, and an end. This is also known among screenwriters as the set-up, the play-out and the wrap-up:

- The set-up or the beginning sets the scene, introduces the main characters and presents the audience with the key questions, the dilemma or the problem that needs to be resolved or solved.
- The play-out or middle is where the problem is expanded, and the main character(s) try to overcome it while obstacles are placed in their way.

- The wrap-up or end is where there is a resolution, a goal is usually achieved and the audience is usually presented with a final outcome.

The three-act structure plays out across most genres (including non-fiction). In a police drama, the three-act structure may function as follows:

- Set-up: A homicide squad detective has one more chance before he retires to apprehend a serial killer he has been chasing for most of his career. Towards the end of the first act, the detective's wife gets in touch with him to ask if he has heard from their daughter, who appears to be missing.
- Play-out: The detective's primary investigation is thrown off track by his daughter's disappearance. As he embarks on a journey to find her, he discovers his daughter's life rests in the hands of the serial killer and he must overcome a series of challenges to be reunited with her.
- Wrap-up: The detective uses his special skills to find and save his daughter. He tracks down and shoots the man he believes is the killer, only to realise the criminal he has been chasing all these years is actually his old trusted partner who had become corrupt.

This example classically conforms to a narrative formula with a theme (good triumphs and the corrupt get justice) and a three-act structure. It also adheres to familiar genre conventions (good cop/bad cop story) and resolves audience expectations (the corrupt get a serving of justice).

CHARACTER

As Bordwell has pointed out, a narrative is a series of events—obviously something must happen and it is usually this event or these events that form the central questions that the story asks the audience. It is these questions—who, why and how—that propel the narrative forward. In most stories, it is characters to whom the audience attaches these questions. The majority of stories are character based and the structure is driven by the characters' wants and desires. It is often the tension between what a character wants and what a character needs that creates narrative interest.

FIGURE 3.2.1 *The Dark Knight* (2008). Batman is a classic protagonist and his enemies, such as the Joker, are the classic antagonists.

In a teen drama this may be that Joey wants to be a world skating champion. As the story unfolds, the audience realises that what Joey really needs is to be loved and his desire to fulfil his wants (through ruthlessly training) take him further away from what he needs (his parents'/girlfriend's support and love). Tension and engagement is also created by our character having a central goal (to be a world skating champion) and obstacles being placed in his way (lack of sponsorship, a seemingly crippling injury, a cheating rival) and then overcome. The resolution comes when the character's goal is reached (becoming a world skating champion) or a sense of clarity is achieved (there are more important things in life that winning). The audience may not necessarily have all their questions answered but are usually satisfied with the resolution.

Characters are the ones that cause the events to happen; it is their motivations, needs or wants that move the story forward. There are usually two major characters that can feature in a story: the protagonist and the antagonist. The protagonist is usually the 'hero' or the main player whose quest the audience follows. The story is often told from the protagonist's perspective. Narrative tension is provided by the antagonist—the character that is usually portrayed as the 'villain' who stops or attempts to prevent the protagonist from reaching their goals. An antagonist could be a vengeful ex, an uncaring parent or a corrupt detective.

CREATING CHARACTERS IN FILM

Stories build up consistent, multilayered three-dimensional characters so we as an audience feel we know them. A film is about character. A character will have a consistent voice. They often have a verbal or physical trait or costume which helps create depth.

In this scene from *Strangers on a Train* (1951) (see Figure 3.2.2), the antagonist Bruno helps a blind man across the road. Normally, an audience would read this as a good character trait and tend to like Bruno as a result. However, in the scenes immediately before this, Bruno had burst a child's balloon and strangled a woman. The audience is put off balance by Bruno's actions and perhaps sees him as a split and conflicted character.

FIGURE 3.2.2 In *Strangers on a Train* (1951), the antagonist Bruno helps a blind man across the road.

FIGURE 3.2.3 This camera shot from *Psycho* (1960) reflects Hitchcock's film style.

FILM NARRATIVE AND STYLE

Style in film can be defined as the creative decisions taken by the director or the creative team that is producing the work. Style can exist within genre conventions or as a statement in itself. Style can sometimes be hard to define because it is often one of those elements of film that is only known when it can be seen. David Bordwell has provided some guidelines to analysing film style. The guidelines can be used to analyse a film's structure and then to look at individual filmmakers to see if there is any consistency of these elements across their films. To analyse style, the following guidelines and questions can be used in regards to film techniques:

- Look at the structure of the film. How is the story organised? Is it a linear narrative; that is, does the film unfold in chronological time, starting at day one and continuing without flashbacks or flash-forwards until the resolution? Or, is it a non-linear narrative? These structures set the limits.

- Look at the important and noticeable (salient) techniques that the filmmaker or creative team has used and that the film relies on. Techniques such as camera shot, camera movement, lighting, colour schemes/palette, editing and so on, all contribute to the style.

- See if there are patterns of using these techniques in the film. Does the filmmaker use these techniques often, when and how?

- Think about why the filmmaker has used these techniques and what effect they have on the viewer.

Bordwell also emphasises that film techniques should not be examined individually but need to be read in the context of the entire film. Remember that there is no one specific meaning attached to these techniques; and all the techniques need to be seen and interpreted in relation to the other stylistic elements in the film. These film techniques can also be examined if they are used across other films that the filmmaker or creative team have made. Figure 3.2.3 shows a still from Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) in which Hitchcock has used particular camera shots, largely mid-shot and close-up, to emphasise the 'trappedness' of the characters. This, along with his use of editing, is an important element of the film's and Hitchcock's style.

Learning activities

1 What does a story rely on?

2 What role does character play in a story?

3 What are the protagonist and the antagonist?

4 Provide three examples each of a protagonist and an antagonist from films you have watched this year. In each case, describe the protagonist's goals and the obstacles that the antagonist created.

Wes Anderson

Wes Anderson is an American filmmaker born in 1969 whose career started in 1996 with the short film *Bottle Rocket*. He has made eight films since then and has been nominated for and won various awards including Golden Globes and Academy Awards. There is no doubt that Anderson's films have a distinctive style.

Using David Bordwell's guidelines and questions in regards to film techniques, it can be seen that Anderson and his collaborators have forged a distinctive style.

STRUCTURE

Apart from *The Royal Tenenbaums* (2001) and *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014), the narrative structure of Anderson's films tends to be linear; that is, there are no flashbacks or flash-forwards and the story progresses chronologically from day one of the story. Anderson's films have a resolution that means the questions that have been raised in the film are answered. While his endings are not always happy, they are resolved. Anderson's films also tend to be structured around themes that are usually either based on family or relationship and these create the main narrative conflicts.

SALIENT TECHNIQUES

Salient techniques include camera, colour, *mis en scène/* visual composition, dialogue, characters and recurring actors.

Camera

Anderson often uses an overhead shot, which gives the viewer additional story information. In Figure 3.2.4, Anderson uses deep focus in this scene from *The Royal Tenenbaums*—everything in the frame is in focus to give the audience information about the characters and their relationship to each other. Anderson also uses tracking shots to provide or keep up the pace or momentum of the narrative, as well as giving the viewer the feeling of being part of the action.

FIGURE 3.2.4 A scene from *The Royal Tenenbaums* (2001)

Colour

Anderson's films use colour to tie the film together aesthetically and create a unity that is pleasing to watch. Colour also helps to establish and build a sense of eccentricity or unusualness in the film. Figure 3.2.5 from *Moonrise Kingdom* (2012) illustrates a typical Anderson shot, using symmetry to isolate the character in the shot and colour to highlight the character. *Moonrise Kingdom* is typical of Anderson's use of a limited colour palette with contrasting highlights. Shown in this scene are browns and yellows contrasted with the red of the dress.

Mise en scène/visual composition

Anderson uses symmetry in his visual composition including one point perspective. As shown in Figure 3.2.6, he also uses planes to compose his actors, which means he tends to either have them isolated or crowded together using the depth of the screen, rather than placing them in a straight line. Viewers tend to find symmetry very pleasing to the eye. It also creates points of interest and focuses attention on these points and, in Anderson's case, it often enhances the comic effect. In Figure 3.2.6, Anderson uses the depth of the frame to create a pyramid of characters which reflect the shape of the tent's doorway; typically, the shot is balanced symmetrically and the colour palette is again browns and yellows with a red highlight. All these emphasise that Sam is missing.

> *Moonrise Kingdom* is a coming-of-age comedy. Set on an island off the coast of New England in 1965, two 12-year-olds, Sam and Suzy, have fallen in love and decide to run away. A search party is then mobilised before disaster occurs.

FIGURE 3.2.5 *Moonrise Kingdom* (2012)

FIGURE 3.2.6 *Moonrise Kingdom* (2012)

Dialogue and music

Anderson often uses what is called 'deadpan dialogue' in his films. Deadpan means that an actor delivers a line of dialogue in a flat or emotionless way. This gives the audience a sense of comedy in the seeming seriousness of the line. Anderson also uses music as a major element. The music he chooses can enhance a character or the viewer's attitude to them, provide a comment on a character or situation, or put the audience off balance such as in *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou* (2004), which uses Brazilian samba versions of David Bowie songs.

Characters and recurring actors

Along with co-writing three of Anderson's films, Owen Wilson has acted in all but two of them. Bill Murray has acted in all Anderson's films.

Learning activities

1 Watch one of Wes Anderson's films. Find examples from it demonstrating how each of the following style elements are typical of an Anderson film:
    - camera
    - colour
    - visual composition
    - deadpan dialogue
    - music.

2 Look for still images from Wes Anderson's films on the internet. Find three still images for each of the elements of camera, colour and visual composition that you think are typical of Wes Anderson's style. Present your findings to the class.

Film noir and neo noir

As a media student when you look at style you should also look beyond the individual or creative team of filmmakers and look at styles that are the result of social or industrial factors. Good examples of this are *film noir* and *neo noir*.

FILM NOIR

Film noir is a descriptive term that was initially applied to a style of film that emerged in the late 1930s and 1940s. It was coined by French film critics and it means black/dark film. Those critics used the term to describe films that dealt with dark issues or themes and had common narrative and production codes and conventions. The social and political climate of the time had a large influence on these films and it can be said that this climate was responsible for the genre. At the time these films were being made, the world was seeing the rise of fascism in Europe, the Second World War, the subsequent Cold War between the USA and the USSR and the threat of annihilation from nuclear war. People were seeing the world as a dark and dangerous place and films such as *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), *Double Indemnity* (1944) and *Touch of Evil* (1958) reflected their fears.

NEO NOIR

Neo noir, *neo* meaning 'new', is a revival of film noir, which uses, and often pays tribute to, the film noir genre's techniques and conventions, but with updated themes, issues and a new sense of contemporary relevance. While neo noir is a fairly loose category, films such as *Chinatown* (1974), *Body Heat* (1981), *Fargo*, and *Sin City* (2005), shown in Figure 3.2.7, could be said to exemplify this style.

CHARACTERISTICS OF FILM NOIR AND NEO NOIR

There is a unity of style that ties together film noir works. While a film does not need to tick every box to be classified as a part of the genre, it does have to share many of these stylistic devices.

Setting

Film noir is set in the big city, an urban space that is dark, dangerous and lonely. Much of the action takes place at night.

FIGURE 3.2.7 *Sin City* (2005) captures the gritty realism and hard-edged feel of classic film noir, but in a contemporary setting.

Plot and themes

The world of film noir is a dark, dangerous and corrupt place. Things are not what they seem on the surface and evil lies beneath. The main themes are the male protagonist's search for personal gain and a woman. The plot then revolves around the protagonist's search for money and/or power and the investigation of a woman. This is made obvious in *Double Indemnity* where at the beginning of the film, the protagonist Walter Neff speaks into a dictaphone.

> I killed him for money—and a woman—and I didn't get the money and I didn't get the woman. Pretty, isn't it?
>
> *Double Indemnity* script,
> Raymond Chandler and Billy Wilder

Film noir plots inevitably resolve, but the ending is rarely a happy one.

Character

The main character is usually a lone male who is an outsider and flawed. If he is a detective, he is usually an outsider in the department. In *The Big Heat* (1953), Sergeant Dave Bannion (Glenn Ford), seen in Figure 3.2.8, plays the outsider cop attempting to break down a corrupt society.

FIGURE 3.2.8 Glenn Ford as Sergeant Dave Bannion in *The Big Heat* (1953)

The main female character is the *femme fatale* or 'deadly woman' (see Figure 3.2.9). She is attractive and irresistible to the main character. Over the course of the film, she manipulates him and lures him to his death or downfall. Along the way she usually dies too. In contrast to the femme fatale, there is the 'pure' woman who represents family and 'normal' society: she usually survives. Feminist film theory sees this as an ideological position that 'rewards' the conventional woman for sticking to the traditional role of women in the society at that time.

Camera

The shots are often tight mid-shots or close-ups, which increase the tension and give the viewer the feeling of the characters being trapped. The shots are also deep focus, where everything from the foreground to the background is in focus. The camera often is placed above characters, below their eye line, or tilted on an angle known as the 'dutch tilt', as seen in Figure 3.2.10.

Lighting

There is a stark contrast in the lighting between the light and dark. There are long shadows and the lighting often emphasises bars and lines across characters, highlighting the feeling of their being trapped.

Editing

The editing is often non-linear; that is, there are flashbacks. Often, viewers are told what has happened at the start of the film and the story that unfolds is how these things happened.

Sound

There is often a voice-over narration from the male protagonist, usually a confession. This, along with camera techniques, places the viewer in the position of the protagonist and enables them to identify with him and his struggles. This is taken to an extreme in *Lady in the Lake* (1947) (see Figure 3.2.11) where the entire film is seen from the main character's point of view—the audience only hears him speak or sees his reflection when he looks into a mirror.

FIGURE 3.2.9 Faye Dunaway played the classic femme fatale Evelyn Cross Mulwray in Polanski's neo noir film *Chinatown* (1974). Evelyn is killed at the end of the film.

Learning activities

1 Define film noir and write down at least four characteristics you think help define the genre.

2 Look for still images from film noir and neo noir films that reflect the aspects of camera, character and lighting that you think are typical of this style. Present your findings to the class. Apart from the films mentioned above, other films you may want to investigate are *The Big Sleep* (1946), *The Lady from Shanghai* (1947) and *L.A. Confidential* (1997).

FIGURE 3.2.10 The use of camera angles such as the 'dutch tilt' heightens the viewer's anxiety in Hitchcock's *Strangers on a Train* (1951).

FIGURE 3.2.11 In *Lady in the Lake* (1947), the story is told through the eyes of private detective Phillip Marlowe. The viewer sees the film through his eyes via the camera lens.

3.3 Photography narrative and style

Photography may not seem one of the 'natural' narrative mediums. At first glance, an image may appear to be just a snapshot but, beyond the surface, it shares common characteristics with all narratives and their forms.
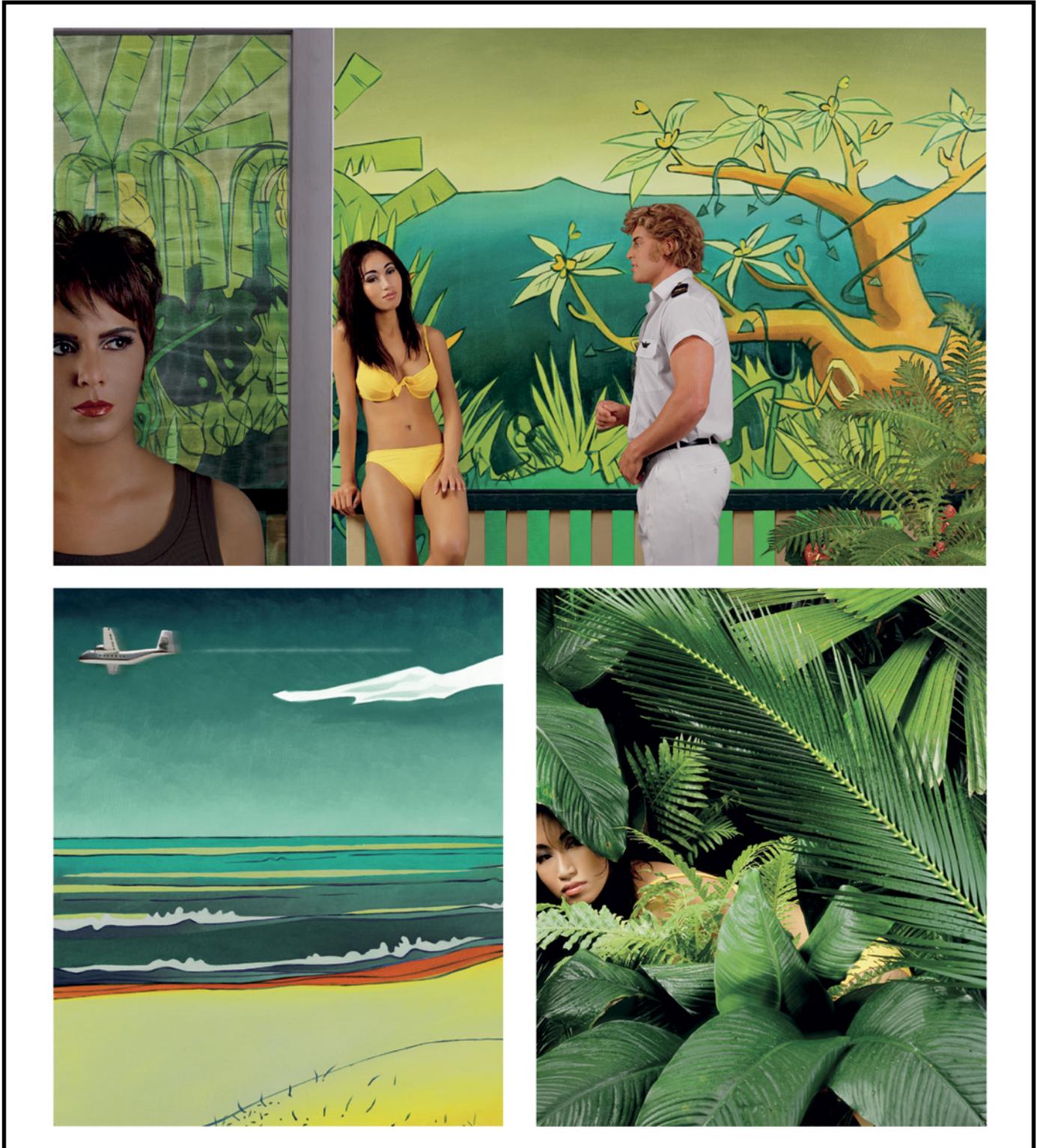
FIGURE 3.3.1 In Tracey Moffatt's Adventure Series we can imagine a narrative: Where is this? Who are these people? What has brought them together? Moffatt also seems to mix fantasy with reality, with a combination of photography and drawing.

PHOTOGRAPHY

A photograph is an image that occurs in time and space and this is significant in narrative terms. Time and space implies a here or there, a now and before, a past, a present and a future, and when an audience encounters these elements they begin to construct a story. This construction of story may be conscious or unconscious, but it seems humans are drawn to the making and telling of them.

NARRATIVE

Narrative can occur in photographic images in a number of ways. A story can exist in a single image and that story can be explicit, implied or a combination of the two. This is what's called 'the story within the frame'. Story can also exist across a number of frames, such as within a series of images in a photographic essay or photojournalist piece. A story can also exist across a series of frames in a more implicit way; for example, in the works of Tracey Moffatt who creates images that are part of a sequence. While Moffatt's work is often put together as part of a narrative series, each individual photograph tells its own story, as shown in Figure 3.3.1.

NARRATIVE WITHIN THE FRAME

Storytelling is inherent in most photographic images, even seemingly abstract ones can tell a tale of abstraction. Stories can be told within the frame in two main ways: implicitly by the use of compositional and design elements, and explicitly with the use of narrative elements.

IMPLIED STORYTELLING

The composition of an image and the use of formal visual elements are prime creators of a story told within the frame. Like all storytelling, stories told within a frame need a purpose and need to be constructed to engage an audience. In this mode of storytelling, the audience actively constructs a story from the elements presented to it by the producer/artist.

Lewis Hine was a photographer who told stories within the frame using formal art elements and with a clear intention of educating his audience. Hine saw in photography a way of communicating to people and educating them about their society and about the role of the human worker in a mechanical age. In Figure 3.3.2 Hine, through the use of formal compositional elements of contrast, creates a story of harmony between man and machine. However, this apparent harmony can also tell a story of workers losing their individuality and becoming a mere cog in a mechanical process. Hine emphasises his points through the use of elements such as colour, tone, shape, line and texture.
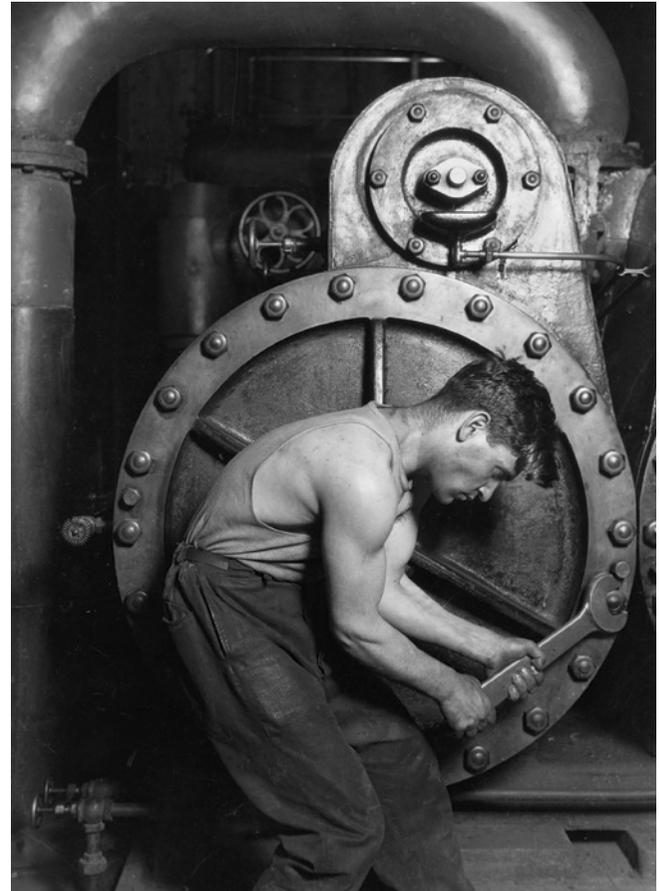
FIGURE 3.3.2 Lewis Hine, Steamfitter, gelatin silver print, 1920

Lewis Hine was a US photographer who came to realise that documentary photography could be used for social change and reform. In 1908, he became a staff photographer at the National Child Labor Committee. The photos he took for the committee helped with their lobbying to end child labour.

FIGURE 3.3.3 Daniela Edburg, Death by Tupperware, 2005

FIGURE 3.3.4 Cindy Sherman, Untitled Film Still #54, 1980, gelatin silver print, 8 x 10 inches (MP# CS—54)

EXPLICIT STORYTELLING WITHIN THE FRAME

Explicit stories also have an implied element when told within a single frame. This can be seen in the work of artist Daniela Edburg in Figure 3.3.3, in which she uses conventional narrative elements to allow the viewer to construct a story. The image can be read in multiple ways and tells multiple stories. It contains themes of consumption, consumerism and gender, while at the same time engaging the viewer via the codes and conventions of the horror movie. In Figure 3.3.4, Cindy Sherman also sets up her shot as though it were a still from a movie—a movie that does not exist. The viewer creates the story of before and after.

Learning activities

1. What story do you think Hine is telling in Figure 3.3.2?

2. How do the formal elements Hine uses contribute to your interpretation of the story? You should look at elements such as contrast, repetition, harmony and balance, as well as shape, colour, line and texture.

3. Carefully examine Figure 3.3.3.
   - What references do you see in the image to the codes and conventions of a movie genre?

- How has Edburg used formal elements such as shape, colour and so on to construct her story?

- Describe what you see and what you think is happening in the frame.

- What themes do you see emerging from the story you have constructed?

- Give this image a backstory and then write what you think will happen next. You may choose to go with or ignore genre conventions.

Cindy Sherman

Cindy Sherman is a contemporary American photographer. Her work is usually presented as a series of images and it often references other narrative media or art history and plays with photographic technique. Sherman's images revolve around narratives that are both implied and explicit, and created by the artist and the viewer.

CINDY SHERMAN'S STYLE

Cindy Sherman's breakthrough early work was a series called 'Untitled Film Stills' (see Figure 3.3.3). In this series, Sherman cast herself as the lead actor in what appear to be still frames from movies. In fact, these movies do not exist except in hers and the viewer's imagination.

Many of Sherman's works are concerned with narrative: her images create a story. We come to her photos *in media res*—that is, 'in the middle of things'—just as we often do with a film narrative. The viewer creates a before and an after and they help to construct the narrative. This is at its most obvious with the Untitled Film Stills series but it is a continuing theme in Sherman's work.

Other core elements of Sherman's style are casting herself as the subject (and only character) of the image and not giving her work conventional titles. After the Untitled Film Stills series, she has called all her subsequent works 'Untitled'. They are differentiated only by a number. Sherman's work explores how women have been represented in the mass media and the art world and she examines the ideas of identity and self-identity.

ANALYSING CINDY SHERMAN'S STYLE

If we look at Figure 3.3.5, we can see and analyse some of the elements of Sherman's style:

● Themes: As in all her work, Sherman asks questions that the viewer creates the answer to. Who is the woman? Why is she on the floor? Is she alone? What is on the piece of newspaper she clutches in her hand? Where, how and in what other contexts have we seen this representation of women? We construct a narrative. There is no one 'correct' reading, but multiple ones—as many readings as there are viewers.

FIGURE 3.3.5 Cindy Sherman, Untitled #96, 1981, chromogenic colour print, 24 x 48 inches (MP# CS–96)

FIGURE 3.3.6 Cindy Sherman, Untitled #92, 1981, chromogenic colour print, 24 x 48 inches (MP# CS–92)

- Colour: Sherman uses a limited palette but one that has a large tonal variation.
- Repetition/Pattern: The checks on her skirt are repeated in the tiles; while the colours are repeated in her top, skirt, the tiles and even in the skin tones.
- Line: The vertical and horizontal lines of the tiles contrast with the diagonals of the body.
- Light: The light is coming from the top left of the frame, placing the lower areas in shadow.
- Space: The monotone colour of her top creates a positive space.
- Contrast: The white squares on the skirt and the subtly varied colours of the tiles, when combined with the lighting, create a contrast that emphasises the elements of shape, line and colour.

Learning activities

1 What is the effect of Sherman calling all her works 'Untitled'?

2 What effect do the elements listed above have on the viewer?

3 Apply these elements to an analysis of Figure 3.3.6.

4 What themes or concepts can you see in Sherman's work? What stylistic elements do Figures 3.3.5 and 3.3.6 have in common?

5 Write a personal response to Figures 3.3.5 and 3.3.6. What do you think about Sherman's concepts and style? What do you like or dislike about her work?

3.4 Storytelling and print

Print has been a natural medium for telling stories for hundreds of years. With the advent of print, stories have been published and distributed to mass audiences.

MAGAZINES

Apart from the obvious writings in a magazine, the structure of a magazine tells a story. From the front cover to the last page, a magazine contains a storytelling structure designed to take the reader on a narrative journey through the magazine.

As with any media product, the audience arrives with expectations that are usually based on their previous experiences and knowledge of the form or genre. When a reader picks up a magazine, they are expecting it to have the features, codes and conventions of other magazines within the same genre. For example, a reader would not expect a surf magazine to have an article on pony grooming.

FIGURE 3.4.1 While the sales of some magazines have fallen, others like *frankie*, with a specific audience, have thrived.

MAGAZINE STRUCTURE

At a structural level, storytelling in a print magazine conforms to our classical narrative structure of beginning, middle and end.

- Beginning: This is usually the front cover, which is a combination of image and text that raises the reader's expectations of the stories to unfold within the pages. The beginning also usually includes the title and contents pages, with readers' letters or an editorial statement to provide an overview of what is to come. Then there are some shorter articles, which lead the reader into the middle.

- Middle: This is the body of the magazine and is where the feature articles are located. Feature articles are not just randomly dropped into the pages; they are carefully sequenced to follow a thematic structure or logic, and are juxtaposed in a complementary manner.

- End: Most magazines do not just stop, they end. There is usually a regular section or repeated feature that provides a resolution or closure. This may be a short article or a cartoon or humorous column.

Learning activities

1 How and why does a reader arrive at a magazine with certain expectations?

2 Name five genres of magazine and list at least three conventions you would associate with the genre. These can be conventions of structure, content (types of articles), images and or advertising.

3 Look at an issue of a magazine you like and explain how it is broken down into beginning, middle and end.

4 Create the contents page for a magazine you would like to create. You can use any genre and you can model your magazine after an existing one or create an entirely new one.

Graphic novels/comics

Increasingly popular forms of print are graphic novels and comics. Comics started as individual drawings or cartoons and, while these can be traced back to drawings from the Renaissance, cartoons seen today originated in the 1840s in the satirical magazine *Punch*.

Cartoons have continued to be popular in newspapers and magazines. Cartoons evolved into a separate branch in the late nineteenth century when several drawings were linked together to form the comic strip. In the 1920s, this grew into a longer form narrative of about twenty-two pages.

FIGURE 3.4.2 *The Avengers*, Marvel Comics

FIGURE 3.4.3 *Trains*, Mandy Ord

Comics' *public image* began to *swell* due to an increasingly adventurous *mainstream* and some insanely popular *licensing.*

The Dark Knight Returns by Frank Miller.

Watchmen by Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons.

The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles by Kevin Eastman and Peter Laird.

FIGURES 3.4.4 AND 3.4.5 Scott McCloud classifies comics into 'mainstream' and 'independent'.

-- while others created more truly *independent* work which sought to reach *beyond* comics fandom and *strike a chord* in the *real world* outside.

Maus: A Survivor's Tale by Art Spiegelman.

Love and Rockets by Los Bros. Hernandez.

Eightball by Dan Clowes.
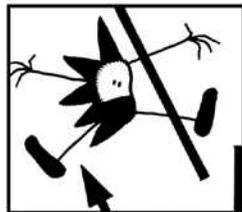
Tales of the Beanworld by Larry Marder.

American Splendor by Harvey Pekar and Various.

Yummy Fur by Chester Brown.

By the end of the twentieth century, many of these comic books had evolved into what is now called a graphic novel. A simple definition of a graphic novel is an extended comic book; that is, it is approaching the size of a novel—anything between 50 and 200 pages or more. The famous graphical novelist Art Spiegelman, the author of *Maus*, called a graphic novel 'a comic that needs a bookmark'.

THE COMIC INDUSTRY AND THE INDEPENDENTS

The graphic novel and comic book have branched out in a number of directions and can be divided roughly into two streams, the mainstream comic industry and the independents.

The mainstream comic industry covers publishers such as Marvel and DC Comics and tends to publish in sci-fi, fantasy and superhero styles, such as Superman, Batman and Spiderman. This stream could be classified as more popular and mainstream. The independent stream is often self-published or published by much smaller publishing houses or co-operatives, and the subject matter is usually more personal and quirky. This stream could be classified as 'alternative' or 'niche'.

Both the mainstream and independent stream follow the general qualities of a narrative; they have a beginning, middle and an end, but there are narrative and stylistic differences. On a narrative level, the mainstream comic industry's narrative is a classical one. The hero starts out on a journey, encounters an evil or an enemy, struggles with them and the story resolves with the superhero prevailing. The independent's graphic novels tend to focus on the everyday. They are often about friends, family, relationships or situations that the author has been in. While there is a narrative structure often, as in the real life that these are based on, there is no resolution. Of course, both of these styles are, like all narratives, also shaped by genre and audience expectation—no one wants to see Superman or Batman destroyed.

STYLE

One of the major differences between the two genres, mainstream and independent, is style. The superhero comics tend to have a cinematic style; that is, they often look as if they could be stills from a film. The point of view changes often and the frames look like film close-ups, mid-shots and long shots. The drawing style is realistic and the colours are bright and saturated. There are few words and action drawing dominates. The words act as support for the pictures. In contrast, the independent graphic novel is often in black and white or a single colour; the drawings are line drawings and there is often a lot of blank space; and the drawings are more expressionistic than realistic, that is, they try to convey a sense of something rather than look 'real'. The drawings act to support the words. The independent style is harder to nail down than the industry style as they are more an expression of the author than the genre.

Learning activities

1 Compare the styles of Marvel Comics and Ord in Figures 3.4.2 and 3.4.3. Look at the role of composition, point of view, text and technique such as colour, line and shape.

2 What expectations do you think an audience would have of each? How might an audience expect the story to play out? What do you think happens next?

3 Draw one frame or a sequence of frames from both the industrial and independent genres of graphic novel, showing an event that has happened at your school.

Zines – an anti-style

A zine is a small, self-published print publication that is often produced simply with a typewriter or computer, photocopier and a stapler. Zines are usually in black and white. When colour is applied it is simple and for a specific impact. The colour is often hand-applied and then colour-photocopied. The typeface is usually one we would associate with a typewriter or it is hand-lettered. A zine can contain writing, images, cartoons, graphic stories or a combination of these, which are usually created by the author themselves. The classic zine is A5 size, which is usually achieved by folding A4 paper in half.

ZINE RULES

The main rule that can be applied to zines is that there are no rules—although, that is not strictly true as, like all media products, there are codes and conventions that have grown up around the publication of zines and there are general principles like the above which can be used to define them. One of these general principles is that a zine is not a mass publication and it does not have mass distribution.
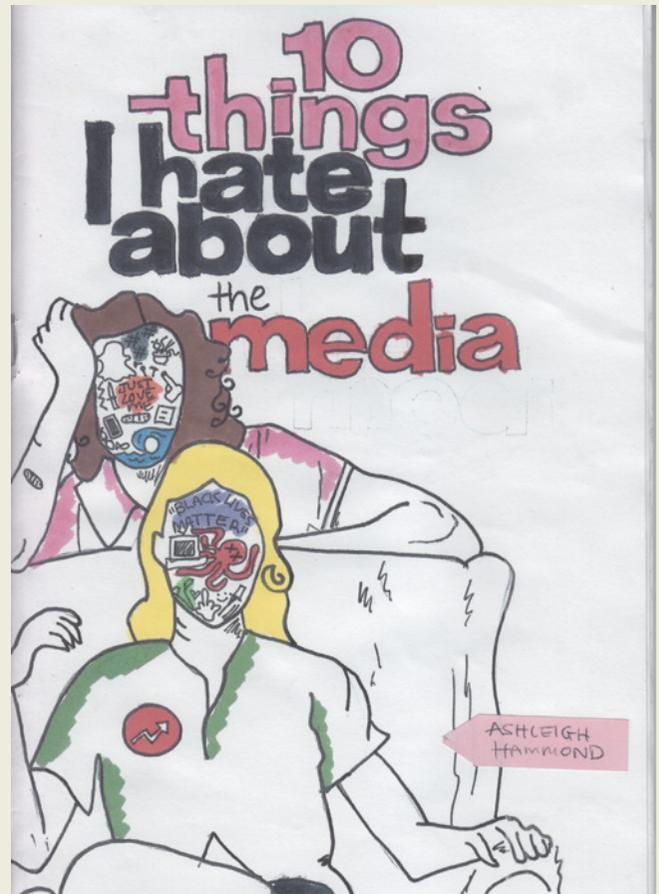
FIGURE 3.4.6 A zine by Year 11 media student Ashleigh H examining her feelings towards the media

FIGURES 3.4.7 Sticky Institute, Melbourne

> Zines are low-budget, independent publications usually made on photocopiers and circulated within their own informal or underground networks. They are difficult to define too precisely. It is the freedom of what may or may not constitute a zine that allows zines to experiment with form and play with various print-based mediums. There's no set page numbers to a zine, no set content or prescribed style, no set dimensions and basically no rules whatsoever. Zines are best defined by their intentions, and the intention is usually an unprofessional labour of love rather than a money-making exercise with high production values and established distribution networks and aspirations to become the next *frankie*. So, zines can often be considered subversive because they bypass an entire established system. They are not interested in being 'discovered'—they are comfortable 'underground'—and they don't care what other people think. Zines may be sequential, an ongoing series, or one-off creations.
>
> Eloise Peace, former director of Sticky Institute

It may have a wide audience but it would be very unusual for a zine to have a print run of more than a few thousand and most have a run of a few hundred. One of the prime intentions or purposes of creating a zine is not to make a profit, but to make the writer's voice heard and to tell the story they want to tell and one that they think others will enjoy.

One of the main emphases in zine culture is on doing it yourself and avoiding the established media organisations and industrial methods of distribution. Zines are often made available for sale by being placed in shops by the maker or via mail order. A good example of zine distribution is that conducted by Sticky Institute in Melbourne (see Figure 3.4.7).

> Sticky Institute in Melbourne is an artist-run initiative or a 'collective'. It operates as a place where zine-makers can take their work to be sold, but it also acts as a production studio. There are typewriters, photocopiers and other supplies for creators to make their zines. The ethos behind Sticky Institute is open access, do-it-yourself. A potential zine-maker can walk into Sticky Institute with an idea and walk out later with a completed zine on the shelf ready to be sold. The proceeds go to the maker with Sticky Institute taking twenty per cent to cover expenses.

NARRATIVE AND STORYTELLING STRUCTURES

For all their alternative distribution methods, zines still conform to classical storytelling structures and techniques, both within their content and structure. The broad structure of a zine is still beginning, middle and end.

- Beginning: Most zines have a front cover that introduces us to the theme, genre and expectations of the story. Often a front cover has a combination of images and text with a short subtitle. This functions as the 'intro'.

- Middle: This is the actual content. Some zines resemble conventional magazines in that they have a number of stories and images, while others contain a single story.

- End: This often coincides with the resolution of the main story, but it may also be a cartoon, phrase or collection of quotes that serve as an 'outro'. It is also usual to have some contact information at the end.

Zines present the story from a specific point of view and they occur over a specific time—perhaps an hour, a day, a week or even a lifetime—and in a particular space. As in comics, the audience reads the space between the frames, called the gutter, as time passing. It is said that the gutter is as important in graphic storytelling as the frames themselves.

Learning activities

1 How would you define a zine?

2 What are some of the stylistic elements of a zine?

3 Create the front cover of a zine.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

■ The essentials of storytelling are audience, purpose, character, cause and effect, time and place.

■ Style exists in how a story is told, regardless of the form.

■ Genre helps to shape the style.

ASSESSMENT TASKS

FILM

1 Explore the style of a director or creative team (some examples include Martin Scorsese, Aardman, Baz Luhrmann, Studio Ghibli or the Coen Brothers). You will need to:
   • give a detailed explanation of the how they started out and became prominent, and how they developed their style
   • analyse at least two of their films using Bordwell's guide on page 66
   • create a poster or video trailer (coming soon) for one of their films, which you believe represents their style.

OR

2 Explore a film genre (some examples include film noir/neo noir—*The Big Heat*, *The Lady from Shanghai*, *Chinatown* and *Sin City*; gangster—*The Godfather* (1972), *The Departed* (2006) and *Donny Brasco* (1997); or musical—*Singin' in the Rain* (1952), *West Side Story* (1961) and *Chicago* (2002)). You will need to:
   • provide a detailed account of its history, and the characteristics of and techniques used to achieve its style
   • analyse at least two films exploring how the films are part of the genre, both in theme and style
   • create a poster or video trailer (coming soon) for a film by your chosen director or team that emphasises their style.

You may present your work as an essay, a slideshow, multimedia presentation or by another method you have negotiated with your teacher.

PHOTOGRAPHY

1 Explore the style of a particular photographer (some examples include Henri Cartier-Bresson, Tracey Moffatt, Weegee and Andreas Gursky). You will need to:
   • give a detailed examination of their history, style and use of art elements and principles in at least two images

   • develop a folio of a minimum of four images in the style of your chosen photographer.

OR

2 Explore a genre of photography, such as fashion, sports, photojournalism or a photo essay. You will need to:
   • give a detailed explanation of the history and development of the genre and the role individual photographers have played
   • explore and explain the characteristics and techniques of the genre
   • develop a folio of a minimum of four images in the style of your chosen genre.

PRINT/ZINE

1 Explore the history and development of an industry comic (examples include DC Comics, Marvel, Dark Horse™ and Manga). You will need to:
   • examine its theme, style and techniques.
   • produce two pages from a comic book in the industry style, highlighting the appropriate techniques.

OR

2 Explore the history and development of an independent graphic novelist (some examples include Daniel Clowes, Julia Wertz, Harvey Pekar, Gabrielle Bell and Art Spiegelman). You will need to:
   • examine their history and the themes, issues, style and technique
   • produce two pages from a graphic novel in the style of the particular author, highlighting their style and techniques.

OR

3 Compare the style of an industry comic book genre, such as one of the superheroes or Manga, with a specific graphic novelist. You will need to:
   • trace the development of the different styles and compare and contrast themes, issues, style and techniques
   • produce one page of a print publication for each of the styles you are examining.

OR

4 Complete a written history of zines, including the role played by institutions such as Sticky Institute, and produce a zine of at least eight pages on an issue relating to the media in general or media in your school.

4 Media forms and narratives in production

Every media production conveys a message. Whether that message aims to communicate, to inform or to entertain, a production exists to send an idea from the maker to the audience. The productions that you make during your time as a media student will have various purposes. Some will be experiments in a particular form or style. Others will explore storytelling or respond to a set brief. All media productions, however, will include representations—of people, groups, themes or ideas—and the manipulation of technical and symbolic codes. Mastering the use of codes and the equipment that goes along with a project may take some practice, but will help convey meaning and make your productions more engaging.

Director Robert Rodriguez began his career by taking a 'hands on' approach to filmmaking, making the most of limited resources and learning by doing.

4.1 Media form and narrative design

To begin creating a media production, you will need to decide on a form to work in and a concept, story or premise to explore. You will then work through the production process to develop and shape your idea, finding ways to make it engaging for your audience. This will involve the use and application of specific media techniques, conventions and processes.

APPLYING CODES AND CONVENTIONS

When you see, hear or read a media product as an active audience member, you deconstruct it by interpreting its codes. When you make a media product, you also rely on codes to construct and convey ideas.

Media codes include:

- Technical codes: These involve choices about how production equipment and techniques are used to convey particular messages.
- Written codes: These suggest that text and language can also be crafted skilfully to convey messages.

FIGURE 4.1.1 Givenchy's 'Gentlemen Only'™ ad involves the use of a number of codes.

A number of codes can be used in combination. Consider the messages that the perfume advertisement in Figure 4.1.1 is sending through its use of technical, symbolic and written codes.

When constructing meaning in media productions, you should think about how codes can be used to convey your ideas and shape the representations you create. Consider the following ideas and how you could apply:

- camera framing to convey isolation or claustrophobia
- depth of field in an image to draw focus
- music or sound effects to set a mood
- lighting placement and colour to convey the motivations of a character
- layering of images to combine multiple ideas
- mixing of audio to create a sense of time and place
- text hierarchy and size to express the importance of certain words on a screen or printed page
- colour schemes to reflect a message, time or genre
- positioning of characters/talent to convey information about who is most or least important
- words or headlines to capture attention (see Figure 4.1.2)
- objects or props in the *mise en scène* of an image to convey unspoken information
- patterns and shapes to create subtle visual messages about tension, passivity or disharmony.

10 things your teachers won't tell you about how to top your class

FIGURE 4.1.2 Catchy headlines that hyperlink to another online page are referred to as 'clickbait' and are a cunning way for a site to gain revenue through having greater 'hits' and readers.

While codes are vital to the construction of a media production, conventions helps audiences better understand how codes can be applied skilfully. Conventions are defined as commonly used patterns or techniques. They help structure media productions and convey meaning quickly and efficiently. In many instances, audiences often come to understand the genre of a production through its use of particular technical and story conventions.

CREATING REPRESENTATIONS AND NARRATIVES USING FORMS AND STYLES

In media, you are able to develop productions in a number of forms. These include video, television, animation, print, audio, photography and digital/online. The following outlines some common forms and their associated styles that you may explore when creating your own productions, representations and stories. Consider what appeals to you and how you may apply these typical conventions in your work.

NARRATIVES

- Tell a fictional or non-fictional story
- Usually have a three-act structure (essentially a beginning, middle and end)
- Involve a conflict or tension to drive the story forward
- Include a climax near the end which leads to some sort of resolution
- Explore character arcs, which focus on the journey, transformation or demise of characters
- Can exist in all media forms

The Monomyth or Hero's journey

One way to approach creating a narrative is to look at the idea of the Monomyth or Hero's Journey. Developed by Joseph Campbell, this concept considers the various stages a leading character would go through during the course of a story and provides a more detailed approach as to how you could create a character arc within the traditional three-act structure.

EXPERIMENTAL PRODUCTIONS

- May explore aesthetics, the potential of a medium or a concept in a loose, abstract fashion
- Are considered expressions of 'art'
- Tend to be less bound by conventions and are more fluid in their structure
- Can exist in all media forms

MUSIC VIDEOS

- Aim to promote a song or the musicians who created it
- May explore a song's lyrics and meaning conceptually or through a narrative
- May be performance based—where the singer or band is shown
- Tend to include rhythmic editing, heightened imagery, symbolic lighting, colour to evoke mood, varied camera angles and movements
- Can exist only as a video production but may also be included in an online production, such as a website

PHOTOGRAPHIC SERIES

- Involve a collection of linked images that communicate an idea or message in their 'through-line'
- Convey a story or idea through each image and also the series as a whole
- May explore a concept or be linked by something more abstract such as a location, colour, a technique such as layering, an effect such as *bokeh*, or a style such as portraiture
- Can exist as stand-alone photographs or be included in another media form such as a magazine

MAGAZINES

- Combine words and images to convey information on a topic or area of interest
- Are produced for large circulation and fairly obvious audience readership, discernible from the magazine's front cover
- Follow a similar format with each issue produced, such as particular features and articles
- Include high-quality printing and paper stock, a front cover with a masthead, a contents page and advertisements
- Can exist as printed productions and also in online or digital format

DOCUMENTARIES

- Aim to present actual incidents and capture reality

- Explore an interesting subject or story—preferably one with a climax or complication

- Present factual information, often through interviews, 'talking heads', voice-overs and graphics

- Can exist as a film, audio or photographic production

You Can't Ask That

You Can't Ask That (see Figure 4.1.3) aired on ABC television and was a new and interesting take on the documentary format. Each episode, which lasted only 15 minutes, featured individuals from marginalised groups answering questions, with the purpose of busting commonly held stereotypes. No narration, minimal set and having the interviewees speak the question were deliberate choices to give power to the subjects themselves.

GRAPHIC NOVELS

- Feature a similar visual 'art' style to comics but are longer

- May tell fictional or non-fiction stories

- Include images and words, speech bubbles and panels.

- Can exist in printed form and may also be viewed in an online or digital format

WEBSITES AND BLOGS

- Involve a series of connected online pages exploring a topic or idea

- Include text, images, video and audio

- Can be created using code such as HTML, or by using a more simple content management system (CMS) program, such as WordPress™

- Feature a considered visual hierarchy and unified colour scheme, buttons to navigate a site and hyperlinks to direct audience to another page

- Can exist in online format only

FIGURE 4.1.3 *You Can't Ask That* explored various misunderstood or judged groups such as wheelchair users.
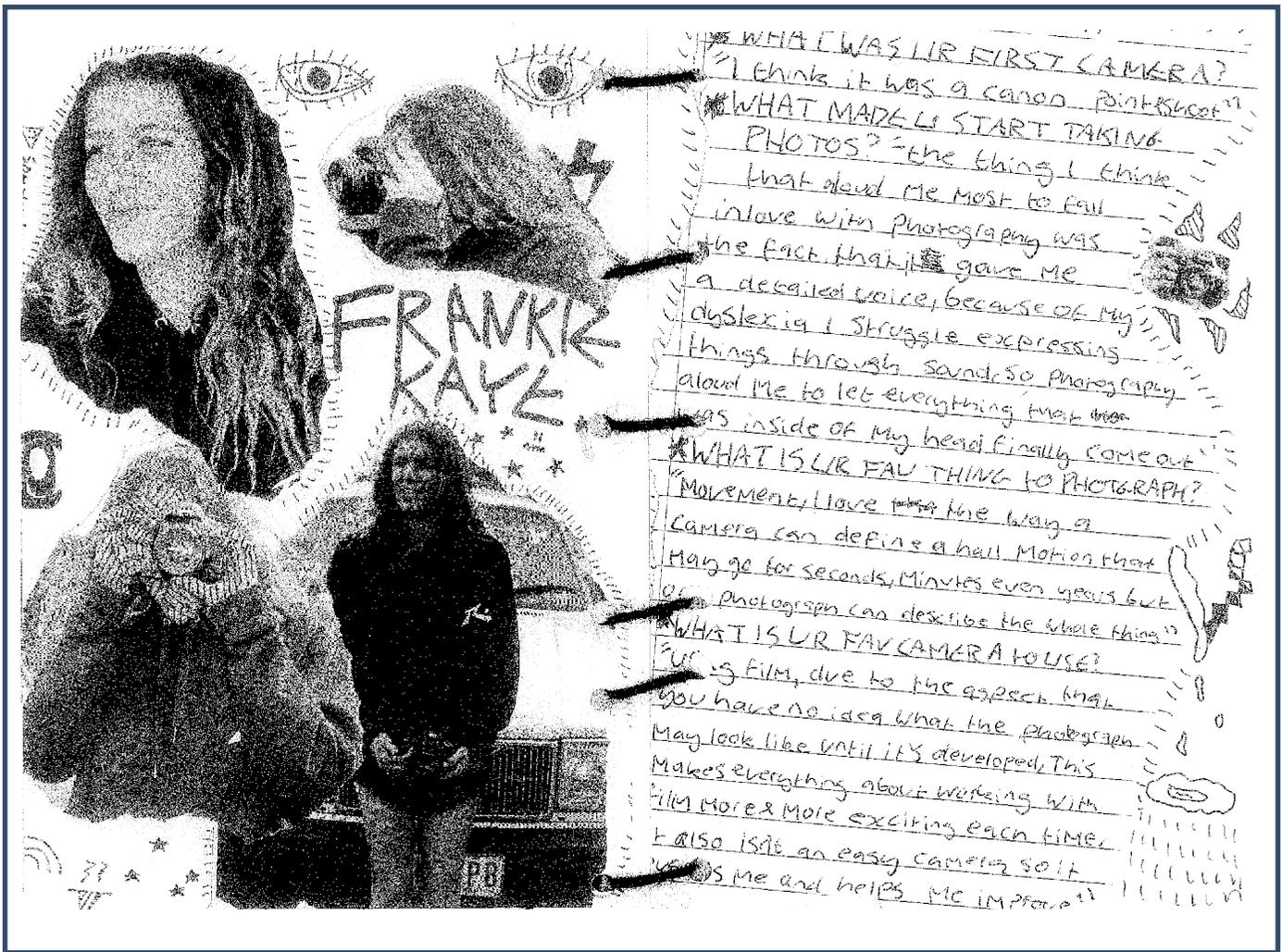
FIGURE 4.1.4 Student zine

ZINES

- Reflect a more casual and independent form of print production or magazine

- Focus on smaller circulation and are often made 'for the love of' creating and self-expression

- Tend to have low production values, a black and white or limited colour scheme, photocopied images or text, hand drawings and a 'cut-and-paste' collage style

- Traditionally made in 'hard copy' printed form, but may be viewed in digital format

Student zine

Figure 4.1.4 shows a page from a student zine representing young artists. The page highlights the typical style of the form, with its imperfections and handmade qualities. Consider how style and form can actually work to engage an audience.

RADIO PLAYS

- Involve a dramatised story or account performed using recorded voices and sounds

- Are structured as a fictional 'aural journey', often with the aim of taking listeners to another place and time

- Include scenes, soundscapes to develop a sense of place, and dialogue from the characters, either in conversational or interior monologue form

- Exist in audio format and may be broadcast on radio or online

CAMPAIGNS

- Feature a series of advertisements for a particular product or idea

- May be produced using a variety of forms/mediums, or just one

- Include text and image/s, a logo for the product or service being advertised and an interesting and memorable tagline

- Can exist as a video, photographic, audio, printed or digital production

Campaign to promote GPs

Figure 4.1.5 is one of many advertisements featured as part of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners' (RACGP's) 'Your Specialist in Life' campaign that highlighted the value of general practitioners and promoted ongoing education and learning. The campaign included advertisements in a number of forms, including television, radio and social media.

I understand dark clouds, but I'm not a meteorologist

I confront the impact of family violence, but I'm not a policeman

I take care of worms, but I'm not a gardener

I'm skilled at stitching, but I'm not a tailor

I grow young minds, but I'm not a teacher

I understand addiction, but I'm not a rehab counsellor

I'M A GP.
But I'm not *just* a GP.
I'm your specialist in life.

RACGP
Royal Australian College of General Practitioners

FIGURE 4.1.5 Print ad from Royal Australian College of General Practitioners' 'Your Specialist in Life' campaign

PODCASTS

- Involve a recorded audio file that is distributed and made downloadable via the internet

- May be structured as an interview, a panel discussion, a piece of investigative journalism or a serialised narrative

- Include a presenter, considerable dialogue, limited music (often for introductory purposes only), commercials and an episodic format

The Serial podcast was released in 2014, with its first season quickly developing a fanatical following across the world. Season 1 told the true story of an unsolved murder from 1999, one episode per week. Its popularity was due to a number of factors, including the compelling and unfinished nature of its story, the stream-of-consciousness conversational style of its presenter Sarah Koenig, and the meticulous research that went into sourcing and developing its content.

Learning activities

1 List some of the media productions that you most enjoy.

2 For each production listed, consider the form and style that is used. Does it comply with the styles mentioned above? If not, try and define its style.

3 Now consider the specific conventions used by each production you have listed. What common patterns are applied to help convey its message?

4.2 Roles and stages in media production

Creating a media product involves the application of theoretical learning. It is a creative process that requires time, thought and the use of many careful selections and omissions. The perfect location, clever shot or a well-synchronised soundtrack that you witness in the final product was probably the result of considerable planning and deliberation.

THE MEDIA PRODUCTION PROCESS

The media production process contains five stages, known as development, pre-production, production, post-production and distribution. These stages and the tasks, techniques and processes within them often interrelate, connecting what has come before or what will come after.

DEVELOPMENT

Development usually refers to the conceptual stage of a media product where initial investigation takes place. Within this stage, the form, intentions, audience and narrative of a production will be explored and refined.

> In 2010, development of the 23rd James Bond film *Skyfall* was brought to a halt due to studio issues. Metro Goldwyn Mayer, who owns the James Bond franchise rights, were experiencing financial issues, resulting in an indefinite suspension of the production. The final film was not released until late 2012.

Brainstorming

In a classroom setting, your assignments may provide a very direct brief about what needs to be achieved by each production you create. The development stage is, however, still helpful in moving you past your first ideas to a more considered and effective concept.

Brainstorming is a common way to begin working with an idea. Brainstorming is a valuable way of moving 'out of your own head', putting thoughts down in writing and getting started. It allows for the documentation of possibilities that a concept may offer or tangents it may lead to. Brainstorming can be done individually, but is a great 'team-building' activity when undertaking a collaborative project. In a classroom setting, where you often need to keep and show documentation of your work, brainstorming can also be a useful way of demonstrating where an idea came from and where it may be leading to (see Figure 4.2.1).
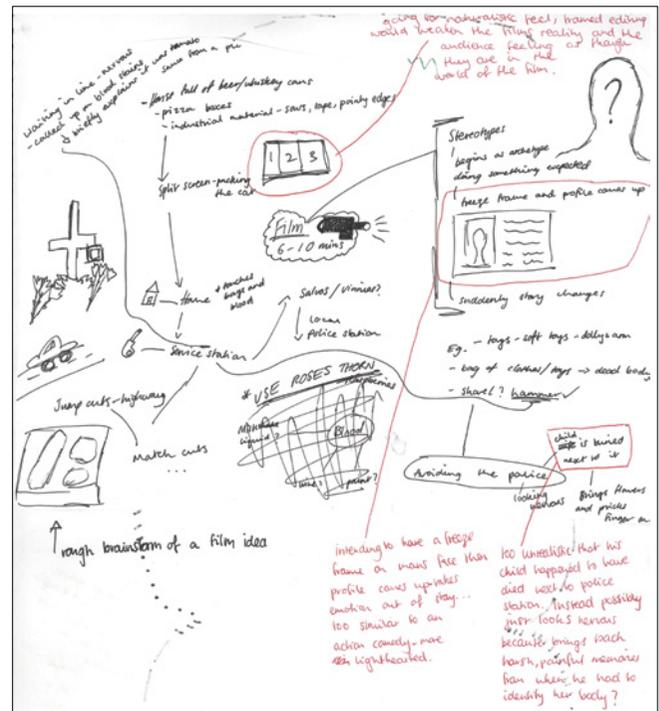
FIGURE 4.2.1 A student's work shows that brainstorming need not be neat to be useful.

Audience

Audience is a vital consideration when designing and producing a media production. Completing some audience research during the development stage of a production can be helpful in generating ideas and better understanding the characteristics and expectations of your target audience.

A target audience is the group that you are hoping to reach and engage with your production. It is a small and specific cohort of people, often defined by their gender, age group, particular interests, culture or geographic location. Keeping your target audience more precise will help in making better informed decisions throughout the production process.

Developing an audience profile, as shown in Figure 4.2.2, can help you to focus in on a typical audience member from your targeted group, along with their characteristics and expectations. It is a useful document to revisit during any decision-making.

Knowing what your audience would like to see, hear or read in the production you are making will help shape your work and engage the audience more effectively. Research can also help you to better understand what an audience may already know about a topic, genre or form and suggest ways that your production could explore new ground. Asking your audience to be part of a focus group or complete a short survey with some purposefully structured questions could assist with this sort of investigation.

Figure 4.2.3 shows excerpts from three audience research surveys on a student's initial concept. Surveying members of your target audience can help uncover their expectations and may also assist with generating ideas.

PRE-PRODUCTION

Pre-production is best described as the 'planning' or inception stage. It is a time when decisions about the form, style, intention and audience of the production are formalised and acted upon. The finer details of a production's concept or narrative are planned, with thought also given to how the work will best engage and be delivered to the desired audience. Those responsible for the project will meet and discuss important considerations such as aims, timelines and budgets. These decisions help ensure that a project can actually 'get off the ground'. The time spent on careful management of tasks during this stage helps ensure more productive work in the later stages of production.

Tasks which commonly occur in pre-production include:

- developing the final production idea or concept
- documenting a specific intention and audience for the project
- considering the use of technical and written codes in structuring the product
- developing a synopsis or treatment
- written planning, such as writing a script
- visual planning, such as storyboarding, mock-ups or flowcharting
- casting talent
- character development and actor/talent rehearsal
- scouting and securing locations

FIGURE 4.2.2 A student's audience profile page for a print production focused on baking recipes

FIGURE 4.2.3 Excerpts from audience research surveys investigating responses to a student's initial concept

- determining budget and, if necessary, seeking sponsorship and funding
- finding or employing staff to work in specialist roles
- scheduling the timeframe for the stages of production
- arranging equipment and props
- obtaining permissions for location use, working with animals, etc.
- considering the final distribution of the product.

Written planning–treatments

A treatment is a written document that explains how an idea will be 'treated' or played out in a production. It is most commonly used for films and tells the story of what is taking place on screen, usually incorporating a few technical details. It is written in present-tense prose and is often used as the first planning document before a script is written. Treatments can also be a very useful planning document for screen productions that have no dialogue, as they provide a detailed outline of what is occurring in relation to actors and action, as shown in the following treatment for a scene in the Australian film *Lantana* (2001).

LANTANA	TREATMENT

When Leon gets home—late—he is guilty and anxious. He lies about where he's been. Sonya knows something is wrong—and he knows she knows—but she says nothing. Next morning, Leon is out jogging, driving himself, proving that he does not have a bad heart—or perhaps courting disaster. He runs smack into another man—a stranger. Leon abuses him, but then is shocked when the man cowers and weeps. At home, hurt and smeared with the other man's blood, Leon cannot bring himself to describe this glimpse of male vulnerability; he lies to Sonya, claiming he fell.

At work, he lies to Claudia too: he says he hit his head on the clothesline. Claudia makes it very clear that she won't cover for Leon with Sonya again. Exasperated (and lonely herself), she berates him for putting his marriage in jeopardy.

FIGURE 4.2.4 This treatment excerpt paints the picture of what is occurring in the story on screen.

While treatments are most commonly used for films, it is possible to use the structure and style of a treatment when planning a print or online media production. The approach to writing about this sort of production may be more 'page-based', providing written details of what is read or seen on each page (see Figure 4.2.5).

Print magazine —treatment notes

Page 11—DIY headbands

In this article, I wish to create a 'how-to guide' to making headbands out of scarfs. This once again aligns with my ideas behind sustainable fashion, as I am looking to encourage those to visit local charity or second-hand shops, as well as their family members or friends' closets to retrieve old, small scarves. These not only act as neck warmers, but I believe can double as a quick and easy hair statement. I will purchase the items within the article, and then take the photographs on my Canon 700D and style the model accordingly.

Layout: Soft background, coupled with images and hand-drawn illustrations. I will also include photographs of the procedure.

Model: Phoebe G

ADVERTISEMENT—PETA

I also plan for this page to host an advertisement from PETA, as not only does the brand resonate with my audience, I wish to capitalise on space within the pages.

Pages 12 and 13—Interview with Oliver Bridgeman

I plan to undertake an interview with Oliver Bridgeman, as I believe his story and message strongly correlates to the ethos of my magazine. Oliver grew up in Toowoomba, and after completing school, he told his parents he was travelling to Bali before arriving in Syria to assist those with extreme situations of poverty and war. However, Oliver's story does not stop there. Under intense scrutiny by the Australian Government, as a Muslim man in Syria, Oliver has subsequently had his passport cancelled, with his return to Australia under jurisdictions. I believe this article will not only inspire, and raise awareness for those in Syria, but also allow my readership to reflect on their own life and ambitions as they pertain to social justice.

Image: Photograph/illustration of Oliver

Photograph: Sourced from Oliver's Facebook page, with his permission to use.

Layout: Two columns and header as an image.

FIGURE 4.2.5 Student's 'treatment' for a print magazine

Visual planning–print magazine

Figures 4.2.6 and 4.2.7 are the mock-up pages and the final pages for a student's print production. Changes that were made to the initial design are noted in red on the mock-up.

It's important to annotate your mock-up so as to include information such as colour scheme, possible font styles and image details, as these will prove helpful when it comes to decision-making during the later stages of production.
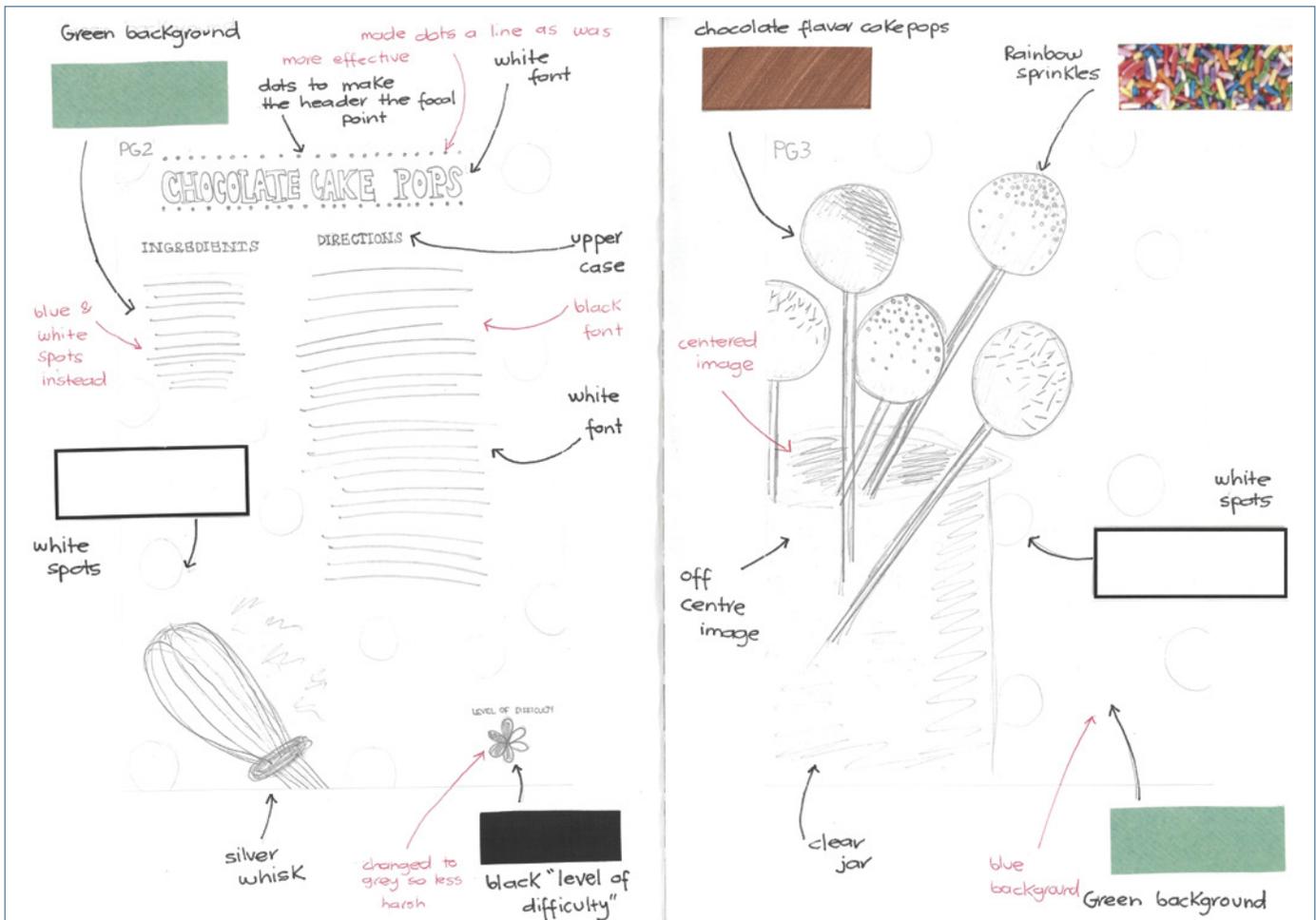
FIGURE 4.2.6 A student's mock-up for pages of a retro-style recipe book
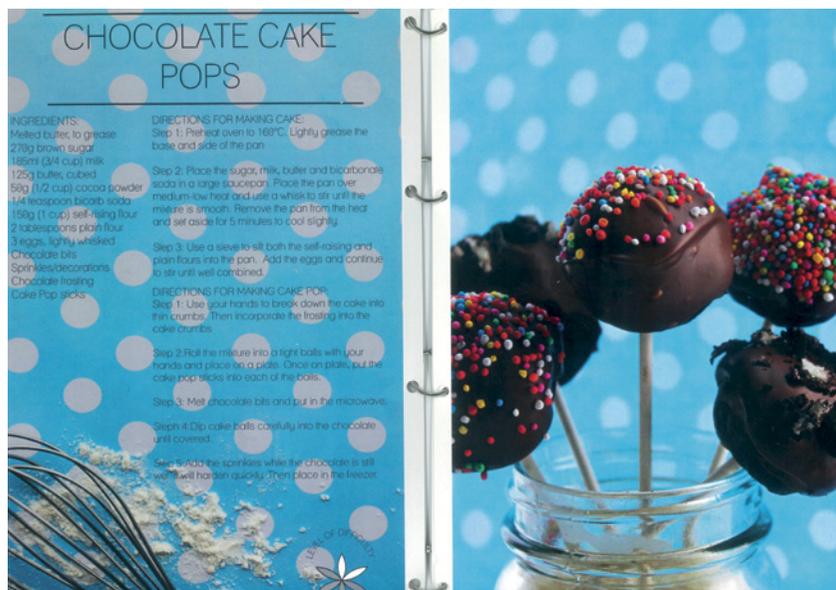
FIGURE 4.2.7 A student's final layout for pages of a retro-style recipe book

Written planning–scripting

A script's main purpose is to provide the dialogue to be spoken within a production. It usually also includes some location and action description, along with necessary technical details that may be helpful for the actors portraying the story.

Different mediums tend to use different templates for scripting. Film scripts are usually formatted in a particular way (see Figure 4.2.8), as are audio scripts). It is easy to use a program such as Microsoft Word to do this, or there are online programs that provide templates for this purpose.

Production title

Scene number

Interior or exterior setting

Scene description

Dialogue

Actor directions

Setting/Location

Day or night

Characters' names appear in capital letters

Voice-over abbreviation

Font style is traditionally Courier

'MORE TO LIFE'—SHORT FILM PAGE 1

1   —   INTERIOR   —   CLASSROOM   —   DAY

The scene takes places in a typical classroom. The tables are separated and arranged in rows, like the usual set-up for an exam. STUDENTS sit at each of the tables, working busily through a test paper with their heads down. The teacher, MRS WEST, stands up at her desk to survey the room. Her attention is drawn to JOSH at the back of the room, who is sitting at his desk, staring straight ahead with a blank expression on his face. MRS WEST walks over to JOSH.

                          MRS WEST

(in a hushed tone) Is something wrong
Josh?

                          JOSH

(with sudden realisation) Yes!

                          MRS WEST

You know this is a test, Josh. It's
worth 50 per cent. You really need to
be using your time wisely. (Firmly) You
need to be serious about this …

MRS WEST continues to talk, but her voice fades
out and is muted. We hear the sound of JOSH'S
voice fade in as a voice-over.

                          JOSH (V/O)

She was right! I did need to use my
time wisely. I needed to get serious.
But that wasn't going to happen here.

(determinedly) I knew what I had to do!

JOSH gets up from his desk, pushing past MRS WEST
and leaving the room in a hurry. STUDENTS in the
room look up briefly as JOSH exits.

FIGURE 4.2.8 The typical layout and conventions of a film script

Voice	Content	Sound FX
Female:	There's nothing quite like crossing the street in India…	Sound of a busy street – motorbikes, cars, pedestrians etc. *crossfades
Male:	Or catching a bit of culture in Italy…	Sound of an opera singer *crossfades
Female:	Seeing a game in the US…	Sound of cheering fans *crossfades
Male:	Or getting up close in Africa.	Sound of elephants trumpeting *crossfades
Female: Male: Female/Male:	Wherever you go… Whatever you do… See it with Abroad Travel!	Abroad Travel jingle/music *fade out

FIGURE 4.2.9 An example of the script layout for an audio advertisement production

Some productions, such as audio podcasts, may have a looser structure and may only make use of a skeleton script. For audio planning, giving some indication of voice, content and sound effects is important, as outlined in Figure 4.2.9.

Written planning—shot list

A shot list is a common form of planning document for a video or photographic production. It is usually formatted as a table and provides an outline of every shot that will occur, in the order it will be played out. A shot list provides a useful checklist of what needs to be shot and captured when out on location. It usually provides details of the scene and shot number, shot size, shot length, location, technical details (such as camera movement or depth of field) and action.

There are common forms of written planning for media productions, which can be helpful to use. However, it is important to note that your planning documents ultimately need to express your idea clearly and in a way that helps ensure a smoother production process in the later stages.

The shot list (see Figure 4.2.10), created for a student film, uses colour-coding for each scene. This helped the student to arrange their ideas more clearly. Shots for Scene 2 are interspersed within other scenes, as these shots were to be flashbacks to another time and place.

SCENE	SHOT	SIZE	DURATION	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION
1	1	Close up	3 seconds	Shed	Shallow to deep focus on bottle
1	2	Close up	2	Shed	Pizza – camera (static)
1	3	Close up	2	Shed	Bottle – deep focus
1	4	Close up	2	Shed	Garbage bags – camera (static)
1	5	Close up	2	Shed	Rope – camera (static)
1	6	Close up	2	Shed	Bottle – shallow focus
1	6b	Close up	2	Shed	Bracelet
1	7	Close up	2	Shed	Crossword – camera (static)
1	8	Close up	2	Shed	Bottle – deep focus
1	9	Close up	2	Shed	Letters – camera (static)
1	10	Close up	2	Shed	Bottle – shallow focus
1	11	Close up	2	Shed	Bottles on table – camera (static)
1	12	Long shot	5	Shed	High-angle long shot of living room
1	13	Long shot	8	Shed	Tracking shot of a man
1	14	Mid shot	3	Shed	Camera (static)
1	15	Med/close up	4	Driveway	Camera (static) as a man packs car
1	16	Long shot	8	Driveway	Camera (static) as a man packs car
2	16b	Long shot	8	Crime scene	Brief, out of focus, bright lights
1	17	Med/long shot	2	Driveway	Low-angle POV, closing car boot
1	18	Med/long shot	3	Driveway	Tracking shot, walking to driver's seat
1	19	Close up	2	Driveway	Fingers rub together
1	20	Mid shot	2	Driveway	Hand wipes shirt
1	21	Med/close up	8	Driveway	Camera (static) as car moves away
3	22	Mid shot	7	Car	Tracking shot
3	23	Long shot	5	Car	Tracking shot
3	24	Extreme long shot	3	Car	Camera (static) fade into next shot, cross-dissolve
3	25	Extreme long shot	3	Car	Camera (static) fade onwards, cross-dissolve
3	26	Long shot	3	Car	Camera (static) fade onwards, cross-dissolve
3	27	Mid shot	3	Car	Camera (static)
2	28	Long shot	4	Crime scene	Tracking shot of a policeman getting out of car
3	29	Mid shot	3	Car	Camera (static)

FIGURE 4.2.10 Shot list created for a student film

PRODUCTION TITLE:		PAGE NO:

SHOT NO.:		DIALOGUE:
SHOT SIZE:		
SHOT LENGTH:		MUSIC/EFFECTS:
CAMERA:		
ACTION:		EDIT DETAILS:

FIGURE 4.2.11 An example of a storyboard template

Visual planning–storyboards and mock-ups

Storyboards and mock-ups are forms of visual planning that help to show what your production will look like. These are usually developed from written planning and can provide additional technical details, such as how the camera settings may be used or what diegetic and non-diegetic sounds are heard in conjunction with each image.

Developing visual representations for each shot in your film, photograph in your series, or page of your website or print production may seem like a tedious task, but it is an important way to give life to your work and to begin to see whether it will look as effective as it might seem in your head.

Typical inclusions for a storyboard are:

■ the shot size (close-up, mid-shot, long shot etc.) and shot length (3 seconds etc.) (see Figure 4.2.12)

■ camera directions (e.g. camera zooms in)

■ action description (e.g. boy runs towards camera)

■ audio description, including music, effects and dialogue. When including dialogue in a shot, the typical convention is to include the first and last line of that dialogue in the storyboard

■ edit details, such as fades or applied effects.

VLS–Very long shot

LS–Long shot

MLS–Medium long shot

MS–Medium shot

MCU–Medium close-up

CU–Close-up

BCU–Big close-up

ECU–Extreme close-up
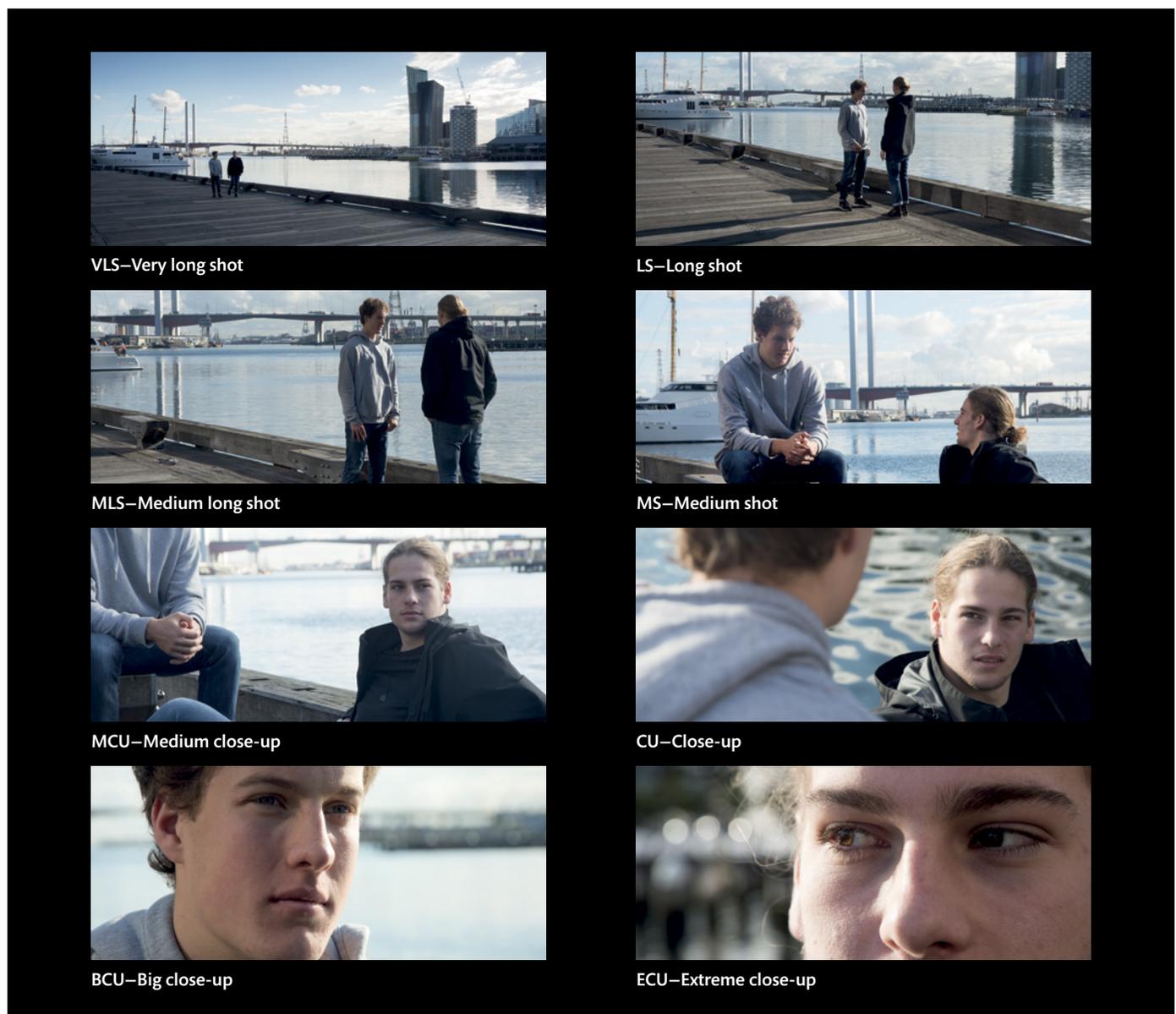
FIGURE 4.2.12 Knowing shot size names and their abbreviations can help to create a more accurate and effective storyboard or mock-up.

A mock-up is useful when planning a print or online production. Ideally, it should replicate the page size of what you are producing and show how various elements such as text, images or graphics will be placed on the page or screen. Using a grid pattern as part of the mock-up page can help to create a more balanced layout, even if you don't intend to use columns in your final page design.

A mock-up can either be drawn freehand or made using a computer program (see Figures 4.2.13). Draw characters fully to fit the frame correctly, don't use stick figures. Use tools such as a poseable wooden art mannequin or photography when creating the visuals. Ask friends or family to 'freeze-frame' important actions in your images.
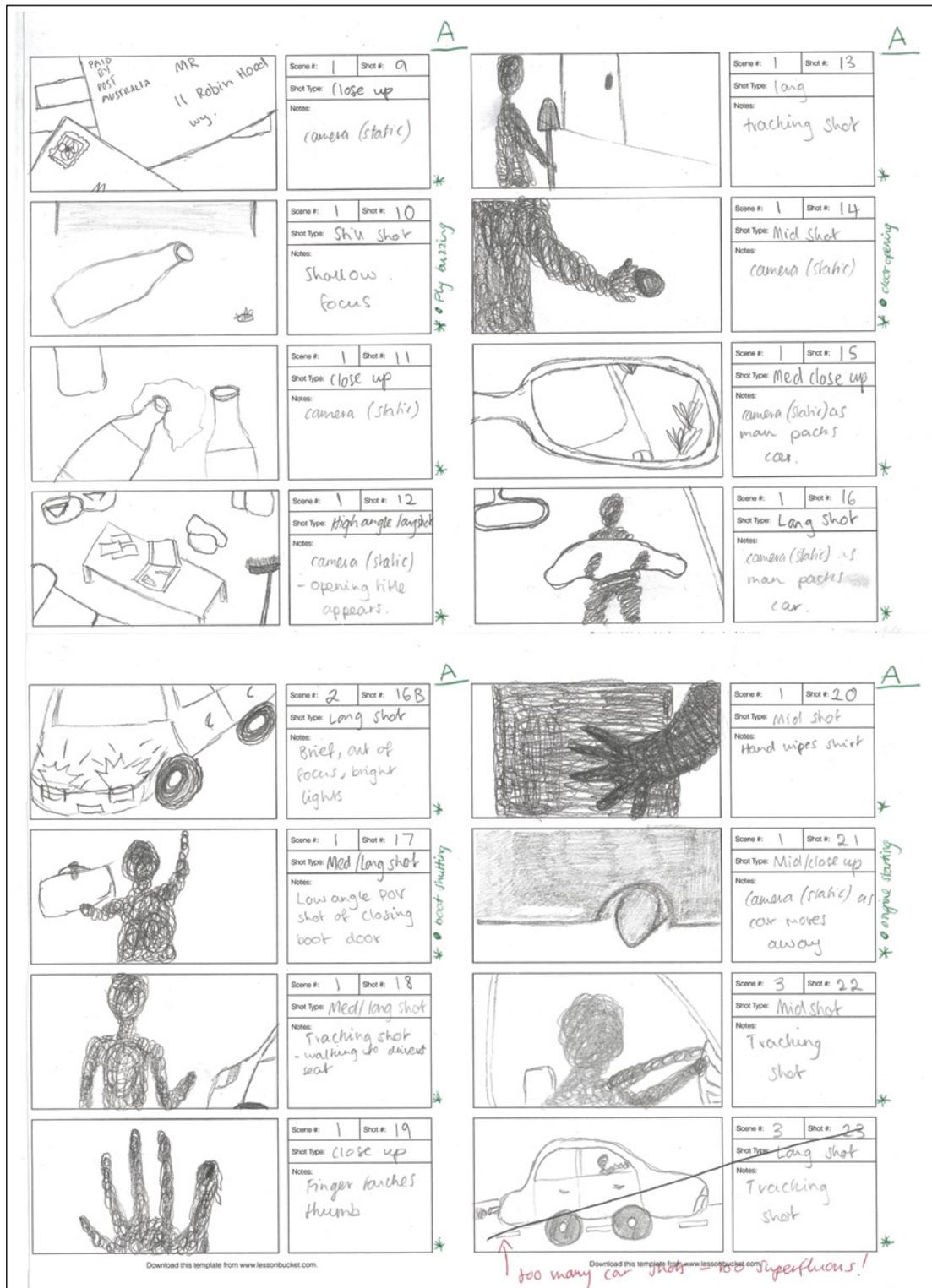
FIGURE 4.2.13 A student's storyboard for part of the opening sequence of a narrative drama film

Schedules and approvals

During pre-production, sorting out schedules and seeking any required approvals helps to 'lock in' important details for the later production period. Consider what you may need approval for or permission to use. Depending on the scope and ultimate reach of your project, this could include permissions for locations, actor's footage, images or voice recordings, equipment, props and costumes, music and external footage.

Regardless of the scale of your project, it's sensible to get written and signed approvals for any agreements or plans you make. This makes your work look more professional to those involved and ensures you have the adequate documentation should any issues arise at a later date.

Although it might seem obvious and straightforward, scheduling helps avoid unnecessary conflicts with timing at a later date. When drawing up a schedule for the production period, be sure to allow yourself more time than you actually expect it to take. It is better to overestimate and be able to take some additional shots, record some atmospheric sound or ask a few extra questions than be rushed and not get what you need. Always factor some wriggle-room into your schedule so as to give yourself time to deal with unanticipated problems, such as technical issues, poor punctuality, bad weather and illness. Also consider who (cast and crew) will be needed for each stage of the project and call only these people to be present. This will help eliminate the frustration of 'sitting around and doing nothing'. Respect people's commitments, have a plan and use the available time wisely.

> When scheduling a project, professionals tend to work with commonly accepted shooting ratios, which help estimate how much footage is shot to how much is used. This, in turn, can help with scheduling the time of cast and crew. Productions with a prepared script tend have a shooting ratio of about 6:1 (meaning the filming will take six times as long as the actual finished scene or program will be). In less structured forms like documentary, the ratio is usually more like a 20:1.

PRODUCTION

If pre-production is the planning stage, then production is the 'doing' stage. It is where the arrangements made in pre-production are put into action and the product starts to take shape. Work at this stage may be collaborative or individual.

Common tasks of the production stage include:

- making the production as planned
- recording, capturing or creating all the material to be used in the media production
- applying technical and written codes to create meaning
- monitoring budgets
- revising schedules to accommodate unforeseen delays or problems
- gaining feedback and evaluating choices made with regard to their impact on the shape of the product to date.

The success of the production stage is often determined by the thoroughness of pre-production. Sometimes, however, there are hold-ups in production that are unavoidable and a process of re-evaluation and adjustment is necessary to get the project back on track. On high-budget projects,

FIGURE 4.2.14 Radio personalities Hamish and Andy

the production stage is generally carried out by a large number of people, with each having a specified role. Many of these individuals will be specialists in a particular area of production and will work to ensure the small things are done correctly, so as to allow the 'big picture' to come to fruition. On smaller, independent projects, everyone may pitch in in various ways to help make a production happen.

> Many media practitioners got their start in the industry by volunteering in local or small-scale media projects. Australian media personalities Hamish Blake and Andy Lee (see Figure 4.2.14) 'learnt the ropes' at student-run community radio station, SYN FM™. The pair described it as a chance to try out new material and a gateway to more professional ventures at commercial stations.

Technical skills

The production stage tends to be much more technical than pre-production, as some sort of technology or equipment will be required to help bring your project to life. There are many wonderful pieces of gear and software programs out there nowadays, however, it is important to remember that better equipment does not necessarily result in a better production. If you don't have the best of everything, you just need to make the best of what you have.

Some tips to consider before using equipment:

- Know what equipment or software is available to you and the possibilities and limitations of each piece.

- Know how to operate the equipment that you intend using before you actually need it. Having a trial run with items such as cameras, microphones and lights can help save time during your shoot. Similarly, knowing how to use software programs such as Photoshop® or InDesign® will save time when editing later.

- Get resourceful. Sites like YouTube contain numerous tutorials for building your own 'budget' equipment, such as steady cams, jib cranes, camera mounts or lighting kits. There are also great online tutorials about how to use particular video- and photo-editing programs.

- If your task allows, make use of a crew who can assist with the handling and operation of equipment. Call on those with expertise in a particular area to help you out or provide advice.

- Have a back-up plan. If something is unavailable or not working, have contingency options in place. It's all about being creative with your thinking.

- Practice makes perfect. Your skills will improve with time and dedication towards learning.

A fig rig is a useful but lesser-known camera stabilisation device that was developed by English filmmaker, Mike Figgis. Resembling a steering wheel, the fig rig allows a camera to be mounted on the inside of its circle, with any required accessories attached to its outside. The fig rig can then be held by the camera operator, allowing for smoother movement between wide and close, low and overhead shots.

Choosing a camera for photography and video

If you are shooting video or stills for any part of your production, you will need to select a camera that is best suited to your needs. There are a few things to consider about each type of camera, including its features, achievable look and export options.

- Snapshot/point and shoot camera: Snapshot cameras are simple 'point and shoot' devices, with many also having a video option (although the quality is less than dedicated video cameras). Although they have improved in recent years in terms of megapixels, inbuilt lens quality, zoom functions and program modes, they can be limited in functionality, image size and output. Often, their image sensor is not as good as those found in a DSLR camera, resulting in images that just don't look as great.

- Smartphone camera: Smartphones are a readily available tool for shooting photos and video. A benefit is their portability, quality recording modes and their inbuilt (or easily available) editing and exporting options. There are also accessories to enhance phones, including mini-tripods and mounts, lenses, lights and microphones. A limitation is that you tend to need to stay close to subjects when shooting, as wider or distant images can tend to 'blow out' in clarity.

Jason van Genderen is an Australian filmmaker who has shot a number of award-winning short films on smartphone. The style of his work, which is often referred to as pocket filmmaking, is considerate of the equipment's possibilities and limitations. The portability and discreetness of a smartphone is played up in his work, which is often praised for its simplicity and authenticity. His YouTube page and PocketFilm Academy website have some great tutorials on this style of low-budget filmmaking.

- DSLR camera: Digital SLR cameras have greater functionality and the ability to interchange lenses, which means that you can select a lens to achieve a particular look. You can shoot in a range of automatic modes, which means things like white balance, focus, shutter speed and aperture can be managed for you. However, as a serious photographer, you and your images will benefit from learning about these things and operating them manually. DSLR cameras shoot and export images in a range of sizes and file options, meaning that the images taken will be bigger in file size but possibly more 'useable' for a variety of projects. DSLR cameras can also shoot video at a high quality, offering easy lens and depth-of-field changes and great portability. Some, however, do not have an active LCD to allow you to see what you are shooting or an inbuilt microphone if you wish to record sound along with your vision, requiring the use of an external one instead.

- Video camera: When shooting video, video cameras are the most practical option. Nowadays, they are small and powerful, with a variety of high-definition recording formats such as HDV, MPEG, AVCHD, and 4K (which produces a massive 4000 pixels across each image). The higher the quality of the recording format, the better the image looks in terms of its detail, clarity and crispness, which may be appealing to your project. However, quality also increases file size and considerable hard drive space will be needed for storing and editing footage. Video cameras have both automatic and manual modes, so users can choose their level of control over white balance, shutter speed and iris size if they desire. Many have the ability to focus manually, offering the option to 'pull focus'—a technique that is popular in feature films and among DSLR users. They all have inbuilt microphones for easy sound recording and many models offer the option of plugging in an external mic to achieve even better sound recording.

Making the most of your camera comes down to understanding what it can and can't do and then using it to its maximum. No matter which camera you choose, it is also a good idea to use it with a tripod or support, so as to avoid blurred or shaky images. For moving shots, consider using (or making) a fig rig, dolly or mount that will provide greater stability.

Composing images and pages

Composition refers to how the elements of an image, screen or page are arranged in relation to each other. In addition to understanding your equipment for a project, understanding some basic composition concepts will assist you to develop productions with greater visual appeal and effectiveness.

- Balance versus imbalance (see Figure 4.2.15): A balanced image, where objects are often in line and proportion with one another, tends to be more pleasing to the eye. When used too often though, balanced images can sometimes seem dull and repetitive. Imbalance can look more interesting and can be deliberately used to communicate feelings of disharmony and tension.
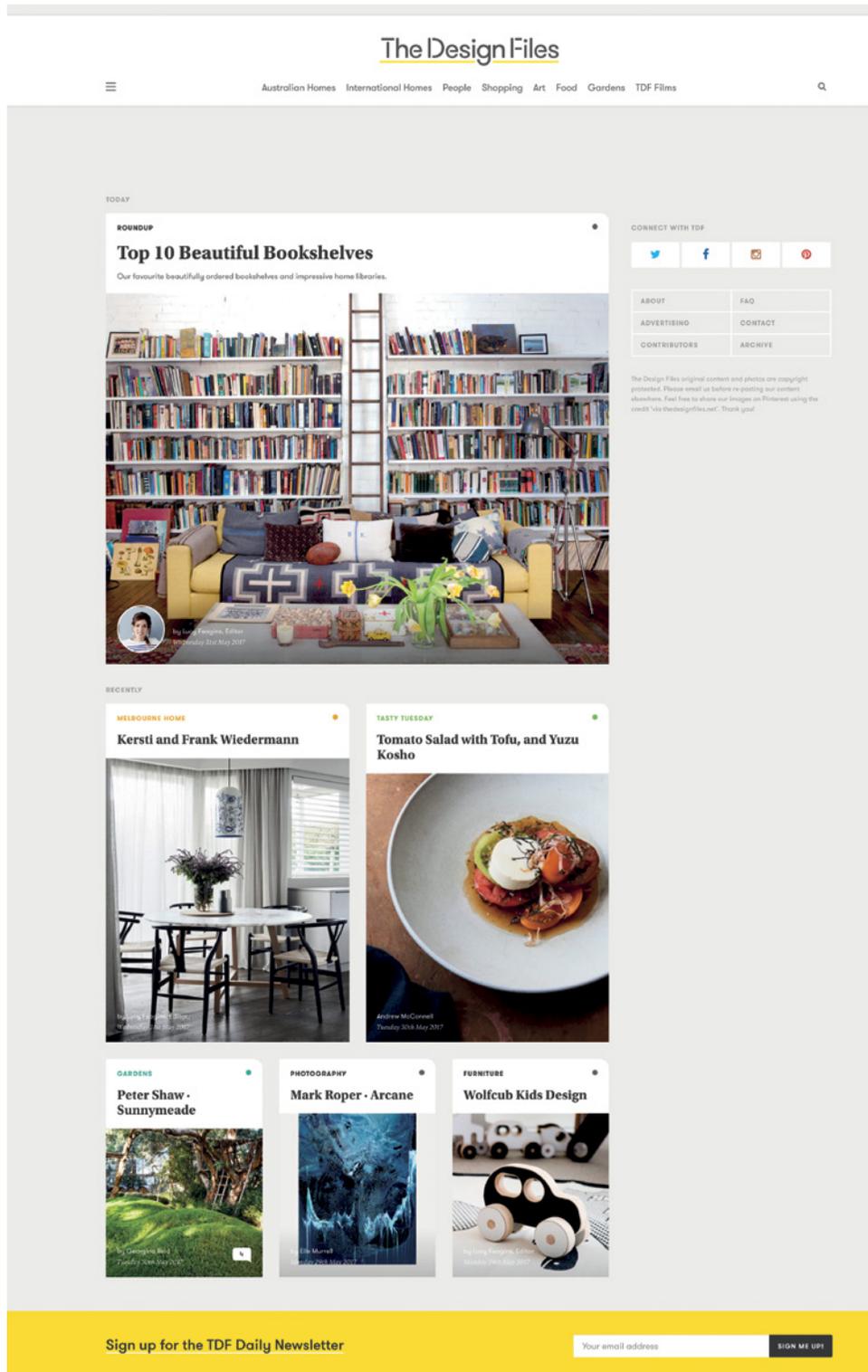
FIGURE 4.2.15 The balance of objects on top Australian design blog The Design Files looks clean and promotes easy navigation, and the features are sorted and ranked in relation to their newness and importance.

■ Rule of thirds: This concept suggests the use of a grid to help create more interesting images and pages. Horizontal and vertical lines are used to divide a picture or page into even thirds. The points where the lines intersect are usually considered the best places to position subjects or points of interest as illustrated in Figure 4.2.16.

■ Use of shapes: Creating shapes within a frame or page can help to portray particular ideas and increase visual interest. Circular shapes are considered more soft and organic, whereas triangles (see Figure 4.2.17) can be seen as dynamic and squares as more rigid. Deliberate placing of objects to create patterns or shapes helps vary typical layout and conveys a level of deeper meaning.

FIGURE 4.2.16 In this photograph, the intersecting lines create a point of interest and highlight how the rule of thirds has been used to effectively compose it.

FIGURE 4.2.17 Consider the shape used in the *mise en scène* of this still from *La La Land* (2016) and what it conveys about the relationship of the characters in the film.

- Framing: When working with images, the positioning of subjects or objects in the frame is important (see Figure 4.2.18). If framing is too tight, details such as a person's limbs can be awkwardly 'chopped off' at the edges or a feeling of claustrophobia is created. If framing is too loose, we can have too much room above a character's head, creating the feeling of them 'sinking' in the frame.

- Colour, texture and line: These essential elements of art are also important to any page or image you compose, as seen in Figure 4.2.19. Colour is a primary source of emotion and can help to set the mood of your production. Texture creates interest, and lines, used in any pattern, can draw us into an image or lead us to look at a certain object or feature.

FIGURE 4.2.18 Consider what the framing of this image from *Whiplash* (2014) says about the protagonist.
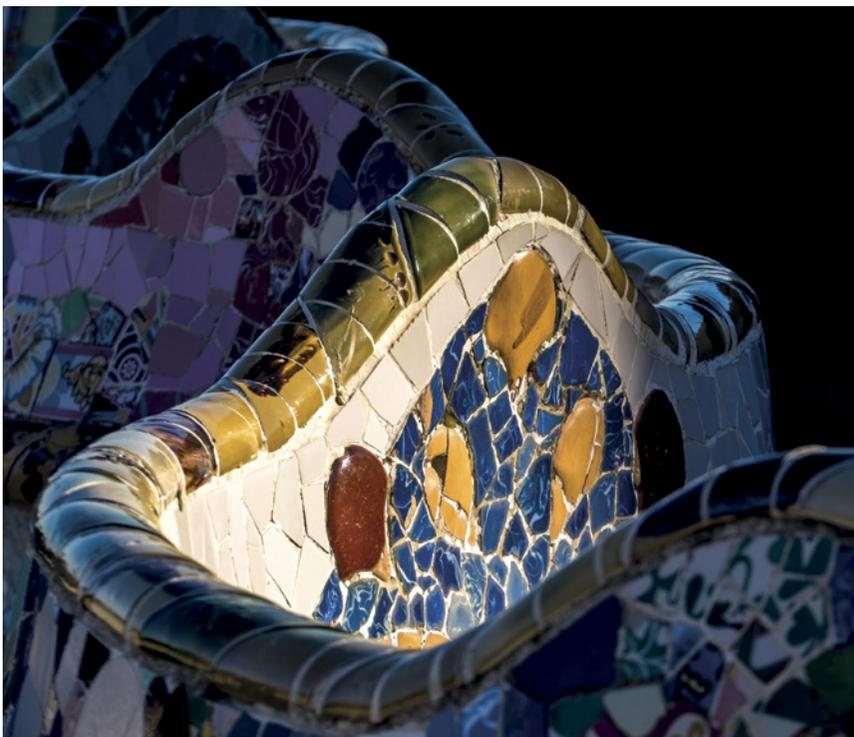
FIGURE 4.2.19 This photograph of Park Guell, Barcelona, highlights the use of colour, line and texture.

Learning activities

1   Look through your photo albums or camera roll and consider whether the photos you have taken in the past are well composed and if they make use of any of the composition concepts discussed.

2   Choose a selection of images where the composition hasn't been as well considered. Use a photo-editing program to try and crop or enhance these into more desirably composed images.

3   Take a series of new images, exploring each of the composition concepts discussed.

Text and typography in print, video and online

Text is more important to some media productions than others. For print or online projects, it is usually an essential component and a vital way to communicate information. For film, text may be limited but it is still important, as even a written title during an opening sequence can be a code carrying meaning.

> American film director Woody Allen uses the same rounded serif-style font style for the titles and credits in most of his films. The Windsor font was first designed in 1905 and recommended to Allen by the great American typographer Ed Benguiat. The font has a certain nostalgia to it—a concept often explored in Allen's films.

When using text in your media productions, there are a number of things to consider:

- Form: Not all text needs to be generated via a computer. It is possible to handwrite, draw or even produce text using objects, for a more personal touch.

- Style: Take the time to investigate the ways that text is conventionally used in productions that may be similar to the one you are planning. Consider the 'voice' in which the text is written; whether or not the use of formal sentence structure and grammar is important, or whether a more colloquial voice is suitable. Think about the text-to-image ratio and what is given more importance on each page.

- Fonts: Choosing an appropriate font can sometimes feel like a real challenge, given that there are so many options. In many ways, a font should feel inseparable from the words that we are reading. Fonts can generally be put into two categories—serif and sans serif. A serif font is one with more decorative flourishes (little curls or flicks) on its letters, such as Times New Roman. A sans serif font is one without the decorative flourishes, resulting in cleaner lines, such as Calibri, Helvetica or Arial. In addition to this, there is also a font's weight, size and colour to consider. As a written code, text needs to be able to convey its message, so always consider how text styles differ in terms of their readability.

> The font, Comic Sans, has become a virally joked-about sensation among designers. Originally created for comic-style speech bubbles, the Comic Sans font became popular because of its childlike, casual style. This led to its overuse, with it often being seen in circumstances considered inappropriate for its relaxed nature. Designers worldwide began posting in a mock-angry tone about this. Their message: if you want to be taken seriously, use a serious font!

FIGURE 4.2.20 A comic mocking the use of the little-respected Comic Sans font

Directing your production

Bringing your project to life during the production stage will require not only vision, but some direction. As the individual or group responsible for it, you will need to take on the role of the director to ensure that your cast/talent and crew know what is required of them.

Directing is about taking leadership over the project and can be something many students find quite stressful. Time is often tight and lots of people are waiting around for all the right things to happen, which can create an environment of pressure. As a director, there are a number of things that you will need to consider.

- Pre-production documents: Whatever form your project is in, some pre-production planning should exist. If this has been done well, it will effectively outline details such as the project's intentions and audience, as well as what it should look and/or sound like. As director, you need to know what has been planned so that you can draw out the important, hoped-for details. This might be the way an actor has to respond to a particular line of the script, how the camera should move during a shot, or how a model should be posed to communicate the message of an image.

- Casting: Choosing the right actors or talent will be important to the believability of your production. There is only so much that you can 'fake' before the integrity of your work is lost. Your project may specify that you need to only work with members of your group or class, which makes the casting process a little more straightforward. If your task and idea is broader than this, you may need actors to look a certain way, such as middle-aged, or they may need to be able to perform specific tasks, such as playing the guitar. As a starting point to casting, your actors or talent will need to be comfortable in front of a camera or microphone, at the very least. Ideally, they may have some previous modelling or dramatic experience or training. Ultimately, you need to be comfortable working with your cast and directions them in what they are to do.

  Beyond using friends and family members, local theatre companies or drama classes are a good place to start when seeking out cast members for your production. There are also some websites aimed at aspiring actors, where you can post an ad about the type of cast members you are looking for, including age or physical specifics.

FIGURE 4.2.21 Director Damien Chazelle taking the lead on set during the filming of *Whiplash* (2014)

- Directing the action: Directing is not about being bossy, it's about knowing what you need to capture and being specific with your instructions in order to get this. Some actors or talent may take time to 'warm up' when in front of a camera or microphone, so be prepared to do a few rehearsals or takes in order to capture their best. Be specific with your praise (such as 'I like the way you are moving towards him slowly') and constructive with your criticism (e.g. 'I need more anger and more volume in your voice when you threaten him'). Remember the vision of the project and try to make the process enjoyable for everyone.

- Directing the technical aspects: On top of having actors, subjects or talent to deal with, you will most likely have a crew or equipment that you need to focus on also. If you are operating the equipment yourself, you need to ensure you know what it is you need to capture, shoot or record. Work with existing pre-production documents, like a shot list, storyboard or mock-up to help you with this. If directing others, ensure that they have these documents and brief them before each scene or image to ensure you all have the same understanding and expectations. Try to speak using the correct technical terminology. For example, when directing the camerawork, explain that you want a quick zoom in to a close-up on the character's mouth, rather than just saying that you want to see a character smile.

FIGURE 4.2.22 Australian post-production company Iloura helped to add facial animation to the character of Alexander the goat in *Where the Wild Things Are* (2009) by computer generating the movement of his eyes, lips and mouth interior.

POST-PRODUCTION

As the prefix suggests, post-production includes all that happens after the production stage. It is the 'finishing' stage, where a number of techniques are employed and the final touches of a project are added. Like production, post-production can involve individuals working in specialist roles. Often, those completing post-production may not have played key roles in other production stages.

Tasks which commonly occur in post-production include:

- editing the content and/or arranging the structure of the production
- applying technical and written codes to convey meaning and resolve ideas
- touching-up of images including airbrushing and colour correction
- generating special effects, including any computer-generated imagery
- adjusting and adding audio such as dialogue, sound effects and a music soundtrack
- making choices in response to producer and/or audience feedback
- transferring the production to a sellable or shareable medium (e.g. a film to a data file).

In film production, post-production work such as computer-generated effects may be outsourced to specialist companies. Iloura is a Melbourne-based post-production and digital effects company that creates visual effects for local and international feature film clients. Their work has been seen in films such as *Where the Wild Things Are* (2009) (see Figure 4.2.22), *Ted* (2012), *Ghostbusters—Answer the Call* (2016) and *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015).

Learning activities

1 Summarise the production and post-production stages in your own words.

2 Use the internet to explore some Australian post-production companies such as Iloura, Rising Sun Pictures and Animal Logic. Investigate their work and provide your class with some commentary about how post-production effects have been applied to enhance a product and help convey meaning. Try to draw on productions you have seen or can access scenes/stills from.

3 Reflect on how important you feel this sort of post-production work is to the process and success of a film.

Editing your production

No matter what medium or form you work in, there is likely to be some editing that needs to be done in order to refine your production and take it from the 'making' stage to completion. If you are working with video, you will make use of a software program such as Adobe Premiere Pro, iMovie or Apple Final Cut Pro to do this. If you are working with images, Adobe Photoshop or Adobe Lightroom will be the most appropriate programs. For audio, you may use Audacity or GarageBand.

Editing is about the selection, arranging and 'tweaking' of content. It is an important step in developing a more effective, succinct and polished product. Being a good editor often involves making your work disappear—many of your choices will go unnoticed in the final production if they are done well but will help its overall 'flow'. Editing, with all its decision-making and technical skill, can be time-consuming. A general rule when working in video, for example, is to factor in one hour of editing time for every minute of finished footage. Therefore, if your production is to be five minutes long, it's likely it will take around five hours to edit. Consider this ratio carefully and alter it accordingly for other mediums.

FIGURE 4.2.23 Australian film editor Jill Bilcock has worked on numerous film productions including *Romeo and Juliet* (1996), *Moulin Rouge* (2001) and *The Dressmaker* (2015).

EDITING TERMINOLOGY

- ☐ **Cutting or cropping:** Making an image or soundtrack shorter or more specific by trimming out unwanted material
- ☐ **Fade:** Altering the volume of a sound or the visibility of an image gradually. Fades can be used to bring in an image or sound (fade-in or fade-up) or take it away (fade-out or fade-down). They can be timed to work with other elements
- ☐ **Dissolve or cross-fade:** Fading from one sound or image to another, as opposed to the usual black or silence
- ☐ **Fade-under:** Bringing down one audio track (e.g. music) behind another (e.g. a voice)

While editing, it is important to keep the following in mind:

- What is the message I am trying to send?
- Who is the audience that this message is for?
- What codes am I applying?
- What do the techniques I am using say; for example, changing an image to a sepia tone may suggest some sort of historical reference, such as a flashback or memory. This is often based on the conventions of a particular form.
- Are the intentions that I have in mind being clearly conveyed to the audience through my editing choices? If you're unsure of this, ask for some feedback from an honest audience.

Jill Bilcock (see Figure 4.2.23) in the documentary *The Art of Film Editing* (2017) explains how she became an editor, beginning at Swinburne Technical College's first film course. Her early film credits include *Strikebound* (1984) and *Dogs in Space* (1986). Bilcock discusses how she establishes a connection with an audience via tone, style and rhythm. In the documentary, Bilcock also describes how she edited the finale, the clap crescendo, for *Strictly Ballroom* (1992).

Australian actors and directors including Cate Blanchett, Baz Luhrmann, Rachel Griffiths, Richard Lowenstein, Rob Sitch and Fred Schepisi describe what it is like to work with her.
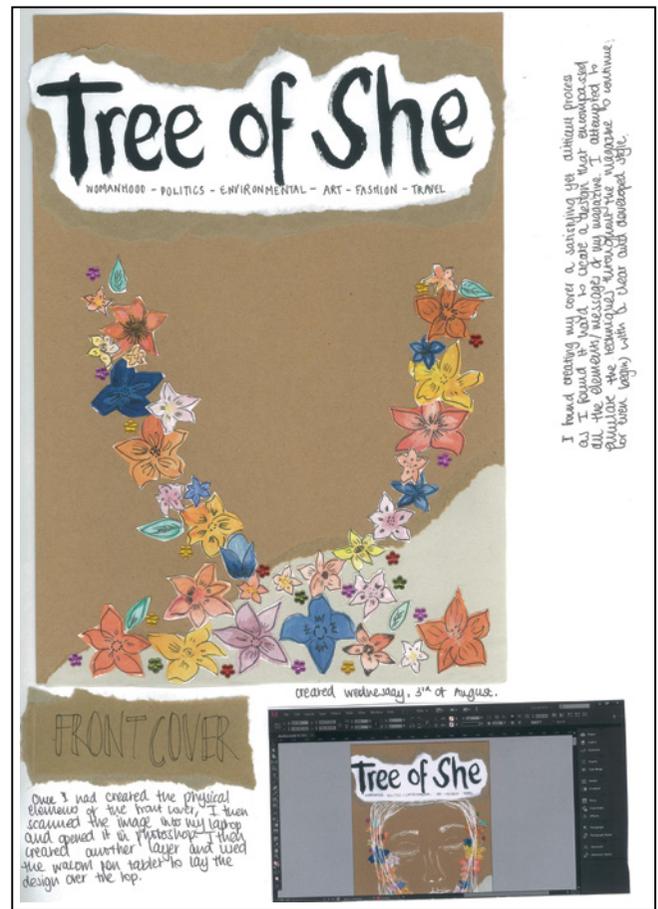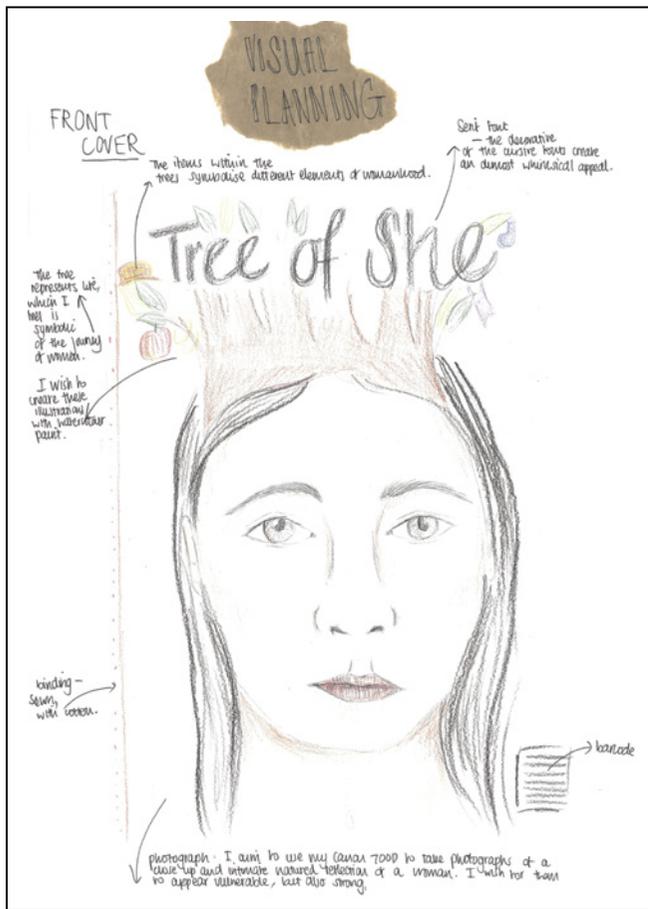
FIGURE 4.2.24 Student's work showing a magazine cover in planning, production and post-production
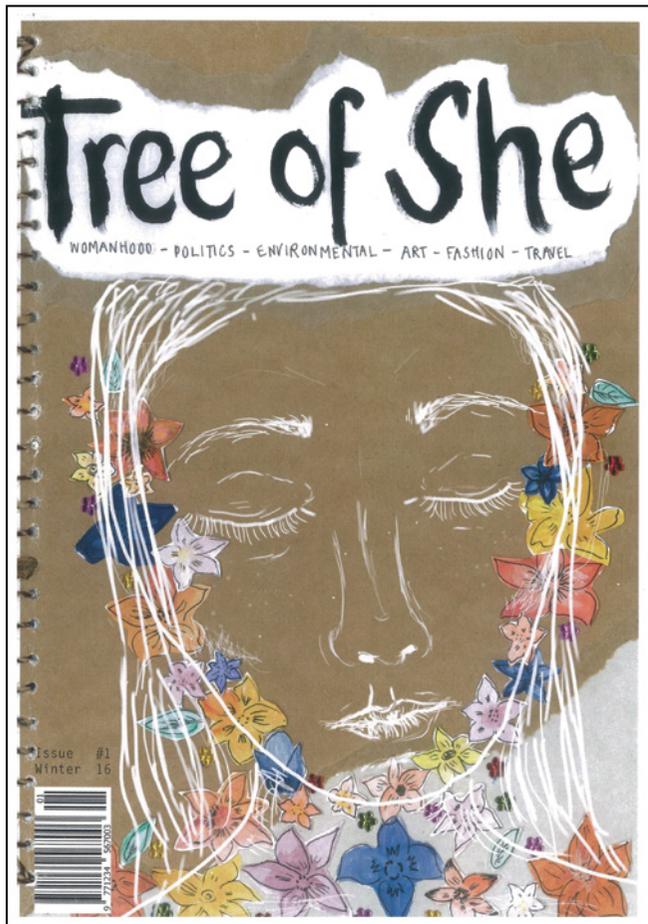
Print editing

Figure 4.2.24 shows a student's magazine cover page at the planning, production and post-production stages.

Feedback

Feedback plays an integral part in the editing process. It is important to seek feedback from those within your project (e.g. the director or students in your group), within your target audience and, when in the classroom, your teacher. This helps you to evaluate your work more effectively and ensure that the intention, message or narrative of the production is getting across in the best way possible.

Audiences these days are actually very skilled in their reading and understanding of media productions. They will be likely to understand more than you think you need to show or tell. It is easy to lose perspective when working closely on a project, so seeking feedback and acting on this will improve your work. And as a general rule in editing—if in doubt, cut it out!

FIGURE 4.2.25 An example of colour correction, showing the 'before' and 'after'

Colour correction of video and photography

When working with images or video footage, colour correction is an important step that helps enhance your visuals and make them stand out, as illustrated in Figure 4.2.25. This usually occurs at the end of the editing process. As an important code, colour can also be used to effectively communicate your message; therefore, it is worth taking the time to consider your images, and what they are saying, a little more closely.

Colour correction refers to the process of manually tweaking the levels of your image, often with the intention of creating unity or evenness across a scene or series of pictures. It allows for the adjustment of luminance and chroma (or put more simply, light and colour), so as to enhance what exists in an image. You will have access to various tools within editing programs that will enable you to alter your image with certain considerations in mind.

COLOUR CORRECTION TERMINOLOGY

- ☐ **Luma:** The brightness of an image, including the blacks and whites within an image
- ☐ **Contrast:** The difference between the brightest and darkest pixels or parts of an image
- ☐ **Chroma:** The colour information of an image, including hue and saturation
- ☐ **Hue:** Where a colour sits on the colour spectrum (e.g. the root colour of burgundy is red; therefore, we would describe burgundy as a darker red)
- ☐ **Saturation:** The intensity of the colour's hue
- ☐ **Colour cast:** A tint or shift in colours that may occur on an image due to the use of particular lighting or white balance

Colour correction can be helpful in lifting skin tones, adding a tint to convey a nostalgic look, or simply boosting the colour tones or contrast levels that are present in your image. The editing software you use will contain some different tools to allow you to correct visuals. There are ways to do this that are quite simple (such as by using the Three-Way Colour Corrector™ effect in Adobe Premiere or the Levels tool in Photoshop) or much more precise and complex. When approaching colour correcting, consider the purpose behind the changes:

- ■ Primary corrections: An entire image is adjusted to enhance its general luma and chroma.
- ■ Secondary corrections: Only specific parts or pixels of an image are altered, perhaps to improve or enhance them.
- ■ Artistic corrections: Corrections are deliberately aimed at achieving a particular look to enhance the message or story.

There are many online tutorials on methods of colour correction for whatever program you may be working in.

Learning activities

1 Shoot some images or video footage using a camera you are familiar with or keen to test out.

2 Using an available editing program, explore the different colour correction tools and make a variety of adjustments to your images or footage.

3 Share your original and altered images or footage with your class and evaluate which changes and tools have been most effective.

Mixing sound for audio and video productions

Mixing refers to the process of working with various audio sources to create a final track that is layered and well balanced. This is done during the post-production process, usually within the editing program that is being used.

When mixing sound, it is important to consider the various messages that are being conveyed by different audio sources. For example, think about which is the main channel of communication. Within any audio mix, there is usually voice, music and effects to consider. A 'mix-down' is about making all of these work together. Consider the following ways audio can be used:

- Voice: Most often, voice carries the main message of a production, either via scripting, commentary or interview responses. It is important to make the voices sound as accessible as possible, which is where choosing the right microphone can help. Also, ensure the spoken copy, script or text is well written and can be smoothly delivered.

- Music: Plays a large role in the creation of mood. It can be used to heighten the impact of what is heard vocally (e.g. as background music) or alone as the main soundtrack. With any music, it is important to consider its timing and style and how these fit into the production overall. If using various audio sources in your project, choosing music without lyrics is more appropriate as the audience won't be distracted by trying to listen to lyrics and other voices at the same time.

- Sound effects: Can help enhance the believability and—if the project is audio only—the visualisation of a production for an audience. Effects may include sounds such as footsteps and doorbells or could be more atmospheric, such as traffic noise or birds chirping in an outdoor setting. It is possible to find effects and atmospheric tracks online, but it can be fun to grab a mic and create your own.

> Foley artists (see Figure 4.2.26) create and record the sounds that appear in the soundtrack of a film. These may range from the footsteps of an actor walking on a particular surface to the sounds of a particular location. They create audio using various means, such as clanging together piles of junk and scrap metal for car crash scenes or hitting vegetables to reproduce the sounds of pummelled flesh for fight scenes.

FIGURE 4.2.26 A foley artist at work

When mixing sound, keep the audience of your production in mind and consider what will appeal to them as listeners. Remember to 'enhance' with sound and allow it to help convey the meaning of the production, not overwhelm it. Sometimes, less is more.

FIGURES 4.2.27 AND 4.2.28 *Dawn of the Planet of the Apes* (2014) film posters from the USA and France

DISTRIBUTION

Distribution refers to the process of releasing the media production to an audience. Many large-scale media productions will rely on distribution companies (such as Paramount Pictures™ for films) to help get their product to as many people as possible. Distribution is closely tied to marketing–the promoting of a product to raise awareness of its existence and make people want to consume or experience it. Marketing a media product is a big business in itself and many professional productions have advertisements and promos playing long before the release date is even announced.

When marketing a media production, targeting the right audience is vital. When a film is distributed to different countries, marketing will often change to best suit the culture and expectations of the release location.

Consider how the images in Figures 4.2.27 and 4.2.28 differ and what this says about what may be important to audiences in these different countries.

All media is ultimately made for an audience and the distribution stage involves the exhibition of a product to its audience. Depending on the production, this could be done in various ways, such as via a cinema screening, a gallery show, downloading online content or the sale of copies to the public. Audiences 'receive' the product and react to it in their own way. Whatever the outcome, the feedback provided can help inform the future work of the media creator.

A number of locally produced television series have been remade for overseas audiences, including *Kath and Kim*, *Thank God You're Here* and *Upper Middle Bogan*. The success of some of these overseas versions has been debatable.

The Australian *Thank God You're Here* television series was recreated in the USA (see Figures 4.2.29 and 4.2.30). Adapted productions are often excellent examples of their reception being context-dependent—what works in one setting and for one audience will not always translate well to another.

Learning activities

1 Consider a few of your favourite media productions. How did you first come into contact with these? Was it by chance or the result of marketing?

2 Source some examples of marketing for media productions that you think are effective.

3 Create a distribution and marketing plan for a new television show or magazine. How could this production reach the largest number of people?

Evaluating your work

Evaluating your work at the end of a production process is an important learning opportunity. Chances are, you will make other productions in the future, so there is much to be gained from some honest reflection. Also, you will need to consider whether your work was effective in meeting its intentions and communicating to its intended audience.

Some questions to ask upon the completion of the production process and after the exhibition of your work include:

PERSONAL REFLECTION

■ What was my role on this project?

■ How did I manage my work in each of the different stages of production?

■ What were some of the strengths I brought to the production process (or group, if you worked collaboratively)?

■ In which areas did I develop or learn the most?

■ Which of my skills do I still need to build on?

■ How do I feel about the finished product?

■ What would I do differently if I was doing the task again?

FIGURES 4.2.29 AND 4.2.30 *Thank God You're Here*, the Australian [top] and US [bottom] versions

PROJECT REFLECTION

■ Who was the target audience for this project and what were some of the characteristics of this group? How did I address these in my work?

■ What was some feedback provided about the work by the target audience (and, if different, the audience the work was exhibited to)?

■ What were the initial intentions of the project or task and how successfully did the final product meet these?

■ What form was the production created in and what characteristics did this form provide?

■ What were the strengths and challenges of working in the chosen form?

■ How effectively were codes and conventions applied in the planning and creation of the project in order to construct meaning?

■ If completed collaboratively, did the group members share roles and duties during the project evenly? If yes, what structures were put in place to achieve this? If no, what was needed to ensure this occurred?

■ Finally, how successfully did the final production meet the requirements of the given/planned task or brief?

MEDIA AS A COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

American actor, producer and director Michael Keaton is quoted as saying 'Filmmaking is the ultimate team sport'. Just looking at the credits of any media product reminds us that most are in fact collaborative projects. Many people work together in different capacities to ensure that a production can successfully move past the conceptual phase, through the stages of the production process and out to the audience.

> Ever watched film credits and wondered what a 'gaffer' or 'grip' does? Both of these roles are related to lighting for a film or video production. Try investigating some other media roles you know little about.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN MEDIA PRODUCTION

Considering the scale of many professional media productions, most individuals working in the industry start to specialise in one particular stage or area. Like any industry, people with different expertise, skills and training are required to ensure media productions are not only effective, but also financially viable.

Some common job titles for media production personnel that are used across various media forms are outlined below.

PRODUCER

Involved in the entire production process and is responsible for overseeing all aspects, ensuring that everything is in order and working towards a successful outcome. The producer is the head of the production team and often also responsible for the financial and administrative aspects of a project. On large-scale projects, there may be many producers, each with a different set of responsibilities.

DIRECTOR

Responsible for the artistic and creative aspects of a production. They are a key figure when it comes to communicating the vision of a project to cast and crew, ensuring that everyone is enthused about the project and moving in the same direction. Ultimately, the director is answerable to the producer, but during the production stage, the director may seem to have the most control over how the project is unfolding.

ART DIRECTOR/DESIGNER

Deals with the visual aspects of a media production. They are responsible for its overall look which, depending on the medium, may involve sets and props, wardrobe choices, colour schemes, page styles or font selections.

DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY/CINEMATOGRAPHER

Works with a camera of some sort to capture the images/footage for a project. They are required to make artistic decisions and must have a strong technical understanding, including a knowledge of the light that is required to effectively capture any sort of image. They are guided in their work by the director and, depending on the size of the project, will often be responsible for their own crew or team of camera people.

SCREENWRITER/COPYWRITER

Depending on the medium of the project, a writer of some sort is usually needed to assist in the creation of the messages to be communicated in text form. For a magazine or website, this may be a copywriter who creates the text (also called 'copy') that will be read by audiences. For a film, it is usually a screenwriter who develops the treatment or script.

ACTOR/TALENT

May also be referred to as a model or subject, depending on the form of the production. They help create the 'content' of a media production, either by portraying themselves or a character. They are usually required to work with a script, brief or outline and make use of their vocal and/or physical skills to convey a message.

SOUND DESIGNER

Responsible for the soundtrack present in a media production. This could include creating, sourcing or mixing various sounds such as original music compositions and sound effects, and recorded soundtracks such as dialogue, voice-over and atmospheric sound. Often, they will work with a crew of sound professionals.

EDITOR

Works to select, trim and shape the content of a media production. Depending on the medium of the project, the editor may work with images, text, sound or all three. The work of the editor usually occurs in the final phase of a project.

ANNOUNCER

The presenters whose voices are heard in an audio or video production. They are occasionally seen, but most usually only heard by an audience. Sometimes known as 'voice

actors', announcers require a strong command of speech and language. While they usually work from a script, there may also be times or roles which require greater ad-libbing.

> Ad-libbing refers to improvised speech, where the words that are said haven't been previously planned or scripted.

Each media project is different and the involvement of various individuals may be governed by the size and scale of the production itself. On big-budget productions, roles and responsibilities will be more clearly delineated and likely to be undertaken by an expert. On smaller scale productions, where cast and crew is limited and the budget may be less, it is common to find people 'pitching in' and taking on many roles to assist. This is usually the norm for student productions.

> John Carney is an Irish film writer and director whose work includes indie music films, *Once* (2007), *Begin Again* (2013) and *Sing Street* (2016). Often working with low budgets, Carney's films have a raw and realistic feel to them. In *Begin Again*, family members of cast members Mark Ruffalo and Keira Knightley appear as extras in the film, filling the scenes.

Working collaboratively involves working together. This involves cooperation, negotiation and compromise. In a classroom setting, it is important to ensure that everyone can play an equal part in a project and this is best discussed early on as a part of the pre-production planning. Equity of workload may mean that some group members take on one larger role (such as director), which runs for the duration of the production process, whiles others take on multiple smaller roles.

When working collaboratively, it is a good idea to keep a log of everyone's hours and duties as shown in Figure 4.2.31. This helps to document who is doing what and show your learning to your teacher, plus it enables a better understanding of the intensity of each role.

Not all media productions are collaborative. Modern technology and new media forms make it possible for an individual to be a media creator, producer and distributor from the comfort of their own desk or bedroom.

> Many YouTubers work alone to make and share content with a worldwide audience. The popularity of vloggers, including Australian Tina Yong, with her beauty, lifestyle and travel channel, and American filmmaker and personality Casey Neistat, highlight how easy it is for individuals to become media-makers and celebrities in their field.

Consider the work done by each of the media practitioners in the following case studies and how this differs in relation to levels of collaboration.

NAME:

Date	In class/Out of class		Duties/tasks undertaken	Working alone/with	Time spent
	☐	☐			
	☐	☐			
	☐	☐			
	☐	☐			
	☐	☐			
	☐	☐			

FIGURE 4.2.31 A work log helps to document the duties carried out by each production team member.

Media practitioners

BRENDAN FOLEY COMIC AND ZINE CREATOR

FIGURE 4.2.32 Brendan Foley at work

I'm a graphic designer but outside of my day job, I draw and make comics and zines. Over the past couple of years, I've done two print projects—a comic called *Thumpington*, which is a ridiculous comedy/mystery involving omnipotent cats and other stupid ideas, and a zine called *Mechadore*, which is a look-book of fashionable accessories set in an offbeat reality.

I only started drawing again when I was about twenty-five and felt I had a lot of catching up to do. To make sure I was regularly practising my drawing, I set myself actual projects with deadlines to work on. That's where the idea of doing a comic came from. So I booked a table to launch and sell my comic at the Zine and Indie Comic Symposium and, more recently, Comic Street. I then had a few months to come up with a finished product. Fear of the deadline made sure that I actually committed to it.

For me, a project starts as a small quirky idea. I will do quick sketches or thumbnail ideas on paper and get a feel of what the product I'm making actually is. Sometimes, too much time is spent in the ideas stage and you just have to get started, even if you haven't figured everything out yet.

When I'm drawing the artwork, I probably have a good idea of what will be on three-quarters of the pages—the rest sorts itself out during the process. For *Mechadore*, I drew two of my ideas, then put them into Photoshop and experimented with colours. I pretty quickly found that my idea looked like it was going to work, so I went and drew the remaining twenty or so images, ready to colour in Photoshop. After this, I put them into InDesign and did the lettering there. Then, making sure it was all set up according to how the printer requires it, I sent it off and crossed my fingers.

Coming up with the initial idea is really exciting and inspiring and probably the most enjoyable aspect of my role. The most challenging aspect is having the discipline to work when you really don't want to. It can be a tough slog at times as it's quite labour-intensive.

If you're wanting to try some similar, find like-minded people. Learn from them, get inspired and encouraged by them. Don't wait until you're 'good enough' to start a project. Start one now, that's what's going to help you get good.

MADDISON STREEFKERK
TELEVISION PRODUCER AND PRODUCTION MANAGER

FIGURE 4.2.33 Television producer Maddison Streefkerk [right] on set

I've worked on numerous lifestyle television programs, including *Luke Nguyen's United Kingdom*, *Ben's Menu*, *My Market Kitchen*, *Huey's Kitchen* and *A Taste of Travel*, both in Australia and internationally.

While studying film and television at university, I volunteered on student productions, music video clips and at local film festivals. I then participated in an industry placement position and became a production assistant. I was lucky to continue working with the production company as a production manager and segment producer, learning from my colleagues and always being a 'yes' person. If there was something that needed to be done, I was there to help!

Whilst in pre-production, I work with the executive producers on schedules, budgets, hiring crew and as a liaison with our major clients. Once it's time for the production to begin filming, it's my job to make sure everything runs smoothly. I also manage the presenters, crew, guests, clients and schedule. When working on post-production, I put together the episodic rundown for each show. In the 'lifestyle' genre, this is where I decide what segments go into each episode. I then work with an editor through a review process. Once changes are made, it's time for delivery. This involves a technical check and dispatch to the broadcaster. When an episode has been completed and delivered, I work on the paperwork, such as writing the episode synopsis and music cue sheets.

One of the most enjoyable aspects of my role is seeing a production go from the pre-production stages to being on-air. The most challenging aspect of my role is that things can change at any second! As a producer, it's important to think on your feet and be able to problem-solve.

My advice to anyone wanting to pursue producing is to not be afraid to try new things. If you're not sure how a camera works or what an editor does, learn. Knowledge is your greatest strength when it comes to problem-solving as a producer!

Learning activities

1   What stands out most for you about the work that each of the featured practitioners does?

2   Many industry professionals would classify themselves as 'freelance' practitioners. Investigate what this term means. What are the advantages and disadvantages of freelancing? What does this suggest about employment in the media industry?

3   If you could invite a practitioner from the media industry into your classroom, who would it be? Why?

4.3 Issues in media production

As you will learn from making your own productions, using media to communicate a message can be powerful. Not only is a message sent to its audience, but it is specially crafted in ways that allow it to be relevant, unique and, often, emotionally powerful. It is this notion that makes the study of media so interesting and creating your own media productions so fulfilling.

ETHICAL, LEGAL AND COMMUNITY CONSTRAINTS

Along with the process of creating media products comes a level of responsibility. Given the impact that media messages can have, there are certain considerations that need attention during the production process. There are also some aspects of production itself that can be potentially harmful or risky for those involved, so must be approached with care.

APPROPRIATENESS

When making and distributing a media production, consideration should be given to the appropriateness of its content. While we want productions to have impact, a product should not aim to cause direct offence or harm to its audience. Also, neither crew nor bystanders should get hurt during the making of a project, which means that irresponsible, dangerous or illegal activity is simply not acceptable, especially in student productions.

In Australia, there are laws that help to regulate what audiences see, hear and read, particularly for mainstream media. The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) is a government body that ensures regulatory measures are put in place for many media forms, meaning that certain media products are classified before reaching their audiences and that media industries (such as commercial radio stations) have a clear code of practice that they must adhere to in their daily operation.

> A code of practice is best described as a rule book for how an industry should operate. It sets out 'do's and don'ts' that help ensure fairness among all players or organisations in the industry and assists in upholding what is considered to be best for the community.
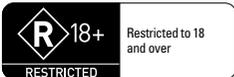
As an audience member, you will no doubt be familiar with classification markers that are used on films, television programs, games and some publications. While these don't stop content from reaching the wrong audience, they do offer guidelines that warn consumers what they are about to see and which age groups it may be appropriate for.

> Some mediums have looser regulatory guidelines about how information is controlled and what is allowed to be shared with an audience, preferring a more 'free-for-all' approach to content. The internet is a good example of this. There are, however, still policies for those wanting to share media online. Often these are approached in a more backwards fashion, where concerns or complaints regarding appropriateness can be flagged or reported only after the content is distributed.

CLASSIFICATION CATEGORIES

ADVISORY CLASSIFICATIONS	G, PG AND M
G General	The content is <u>very mild</u> in impact. G films and computer games are for general viewing.
PG Parental guidance recommended	The content is <u>mild</u> in impact. PG films and computer games contain material that a parent or carer might need to explain to younger children.
M Recommended for mature audiences	The content is <u>moderate</u> in impact. M films and computer games are not recommended for people aged under 15.

FIGURE 4.3.1 All films in Australia must have a classification code.

AGE RESTRICTED CLASSIFICATIONS	MA15+ AND R18+
MA 15+ RESTRICTED — Not suitable for people under 15. Under 15s must be accompanied by a parent or adult guardian	The content is <u>strong</u> in impact. People under 15 must be accompanied by a parent or adult guardian to hire or buy these films or games or to see these films in a cinema. These games cannot be demonstrated in a public place. A guardian is a person who is exercising 'parental control' over the person under 15 years of age. The guardian must be 18 years or over.
R 18+ RESTRICTED — Restricted to 18 and over	The content is <u>high</u> in impact. People under 18 are not permitted to buy or hire these films or games or to see these films in a cinema. These games cannot be demonstrated in a public place.

When making media productions of your own, it is important to consider who your target audience is and what level of content may be appropriate for them. Productions that target the 'tween' market will use quite different language and themes to those aimed at an adult audience. The existing Australian classification markers can be useful in guiding your decision-making about audiences and content. Another good rule for deciding what is appropriate for a production made in the school classroom is considering what would be appropriate to share with your school board or principal. If something would raise concern, it's probably best to leave it out.

PERMISSIONS AND COPYRIGHT

As a media maker, artist and creator, you will begin to understand the importance of your own ideas and the value of the original content you create. You will know that these are unique and often take a lot of effort to pull together. You will want credit for your work and won't want these to be taken by someone else without credit.

This is where copyright comes in. Copyright is all about protecting the original work that an individual (often an artist, musician, filmmaker, photographer or writer) creates. Copyright is free, automatic and often shown by the © symbol. It is enacted as soon as you create something and lasts for seventy years after your death. It means that you own the rights to your work and anyone who wishes to use, share, reproduce, perform or adapt it requires your permission.

Copyright also means that anything you wish to use in a media production that is not your own (e.g. a soundtrack or image) requires you to seek the permission of the person who created it. It may take some effort tracking the maker down, making contact with them and getting their approval. There may also be a fee involved in using their work.

FIGURE 4.3.2 YouTube copyright infringement notification

Generally, people who want to use copyright material need to contact the copyright owners to get permission unless an exception to infringement applies. In relation to music, the copyright owners are typically:

- For music and lyric: the composer or songwriter (or if they are represented by a music publisher, the music publisher)
- For sound recordings: the record company that released the recording, although this is sometimes shared with the performers who contributed to the sounds of the performance and
- For performances: sometimes you need the permission of the performers to record their performance or to use the recording on a soundtrack (or both).

Extract from 'Music: Use in home videos & student films', Information sheet G038v12, Australian Copyright Council, 2014

In an educational context, there are a few exceptions to copyright law. Currently, if you are making a production for school or study only, this is deemed 'fair dealing' and you are not required to get copyright for music tracks or images that you wish use. However, if your work becomes public (e.g. it is exhibited publicly outside of the school environment in a competition with a public screening), then copyright clearance is required.

The Australian Copyright Council's website is helpful to explore if you have questions about permissions and explains what to do if your own copyright is infringed.

Video sharing sites like YouTube have a different approach to copyright. It allows users to submit a copyright infringement complaint if something that is their own was used without authorisation. It also uses a system called ContentID to scan uploaded files for recognisable copyrighted content, such as popular music, then giving copyright owners the choice to alter, block or monetise the content.

CREATIVE COMMONS

Creative Commons is now a worldwide movement that allows the sharing of original creative content such as video footage, music or images. Locally, Creative Commons Australia is a not-for-profit organisation that allows creators who own copyright to apply for a licence that allows them to grant permission to others to use their work legally. The licences vary and outline certain rules that must be adhered to, such as no commercial use of a work or no modifying of a work. In all cases, the work of the original creator must be attributed. Put simply, it is an opportunity to share creative work with others for 'good will' and exposure.

Using Creative Commons material in your media productions makes it easier to access content that is free and available for use, while also supporting the work of other creatives. In return, you also may like to create and license something yourself that can then be shared with the broader creative community.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

When making a media production, you will often be working in public areas or dealing with people. Even if you're working with a small crew and limited equipment, you will still need to consider occupational health and safety issues. An excellent approach to ensuring a safe environment is to focus on the notion of prevention. This suggests that possible risks are considered and assessed before they have the chance to arise. In a media production setting, this may include an awareness of and a plan for:

- lifting and carrying heavy production equipment
- using electricity or powered equipment
- working outdoors in various weather conditions, often with powered equipment (water and electricity don't mix!)
- dealing with chemicals in a darkroom
- tripping hazards such as power cords and sound cables
- working with sets, props or costumes
- sharing public space with others
- acting out activities that could cause injury (e.g. fight scenes or chase scenes)
- undertaking long hours of sitting in front of screens or dealing with loud sound levels.

PRODUCTION ETIQUETTE

Finally, a word on etiquette: although working on a production can be a busy and stressful time, it is still important to remember your manners! Some simple niceties should really be a given, such as seeking permission before filming a person or recording their voice, making use of a public location, or sharing content in public. As discussed earlier in this chapter, seeking formal permission is sometimes required for the use of certain locations and this should be dealt with during pre-production planning. In a classroom context, it is important to remember that everyone will be learning the craft, so patience is often required in order to allow each individual the chance to do their best work.

Many people, including teachers, friends, relatives, past students, business owners and members of the general public are often very happy to help out and contribute to student productions, particularly those that seem well run. You will often be amazed by who and what you can get access to, simply by asking nicely. As the media industry can often be very focused on 'who you know' and the success of your last job, be careful not to burn any bridges at any stage of your short or long media career. Ask politely, work respectfully and always share credit and the final product with those who helped you make it.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Media productions are constructed using technical and written codes. Understanding these codes and what they can signify will enable you to apply and manipulate them more effectively.

- Take time to investigate and understand the medium or form that you will develop your production in, being aware of commonly used conventions.

- The production process contains different stages: development, pre-production, production, post-production and distribution. Important tasks happen in each stage and contribute to a project overall.

- Pre-production is when important visual and written planning for a media production takes place. Production is the 'making' stage. Post-production involves the editing and refining of a media production.

- Many media productions are collaborative. They will involve various people working together in different roles to achieve the shared vision of a project. Different individuals will be involved at different times throughout the production process. The workload of these individuals will also differ and this is often dependent on the scale of the project itself.

- There are ethical, legal and community standards to consider and adhere to when making a media production, such as copyright and permissions, health and safety, appropriateness and community awareness.

ASSESSMENT TASKS

1   Develop a short media production in two of the media forms listed below that each represent either a chosen person or an idea in different ways. For example, you could portray a teenager as rebellious in one form and then hard-working in the other, or a product such as bottled water as luxurious and then as unpretentious. During the production process, focus on applying the technical, symbolic and written codes mentioned to convey your intended message.

   Video (thirty-second ad or opening sequence)
   - Camera angles to convey status
   - Sound (including music and voice-over) to set the tone
   - Editing (such as addition of text or colour correction) to refine the message being sent

   Print (magazine cover or a one-page ad)
   - *Mise en scène*/setting to communicate information
   - Colour to convey meaning
   - Size to indicate hierarchy and importance of text

   Audio (thirty-second ad or interview)
   - Music to set the tone
   - Language and style of voice-over/script to communicate information
   - Editing/mixing of audio to create a sense of time and place

   Share your completed work with the class, discussing the ways that technical, symbolic and written codes have been used effectively. Evaluate the strengths of each form in conveying the created representations.

2   After undertaking a particular role on a media production (e.g. editor), prepare a short report using media technologies (e.g. a podcast) to reflect on the production process and the duties involved in the role at various stages. Include advice for other students undertaking the role in the future, such as:
   - Responsibilities in each stage of the production process, from development to distribution
   - Advice on helpful planning templates, equipment and software programs to use
   - Benefits and challenges of the role
   - How to best manage the workload demands involved in the role (e.g. busy periods)
   - Tips on cooperating and working with other roles (e.g. the director)

3   Working individually, develop a short narrative production in a chosen or given form. Use the concept of the three-act structure or stages of the Monomyth—mentioned earlier in this chapter—to develop a story. Complete the written and visual pre-production planning (e.g. script and storyboard or treatment and mock-ups) to document your ideas for the project, then pitch this to the class. Gather interested students to collaboratively bring the plan to life as a media production.

5 Australian stories

Stories form a crucial part of any culture. They inform, entertain and educate. Stories help shape, confirm, challenge and change beliefs within a society. Stories entrench cultural values and shape a nation's cultural identity. Through various forms of media narratives, Australian stories have been doing this for over a century. These narratives include moving image, still image, spoken word, print and the rapidly increasing number of digital/online ones.

In this chapter, both fictional and non-fictional Australian media screen stories will be examined. Also examined is how the process of creation to establish meaning combines with the process of audience reading to establish understanding. Australian stories are as diverse and multicultural as the country's streets, cities, towns and rural areas. In the beginning, these stories reflected a mostly British heritage. The Australian media stories of the twenty-first century now reflect a much more diverse culture. They do not reflect an agreed and limited history of Australian culture and identity, but explore and argue about what our identity actually was, is now and will be in the future.

Archy played by Mark Lee, about to go over the top at the Battle of the Nek in the film, *Gallipoli* (1981)

5.1 History of Australian screen stories

The history of Australian screen stories started in the late 1890s. Less than a year after Auguste and Louis Lumière began screening films in Paris, Melbourne audiences were seeing films flicker across the walls of the Athenaeum Hall in Collins Street.

ACTUALITY FILMS

Like the early films of the Lumière brothers, Australian films started as curiosities or to record historic events and slices of Australian life. Screen Australia refers to this genre of films as 'actualities'. So, just as the Lumière brothers screened the arrival of a train at La Ciotat in 1895, in 1899 Australians audiences could see the arrival of the Newtown train at Petersham station in Sydney's western suburbs. While some of these early actuality films were produced by individual film pioneers, many others were commissioned by institutions.

In October 1898, the Queensland Government's Department of Agriculture funded a film production project, which was an early screen contributor to the story of Australian identity and its links to the Australian outback. The project was undertaken by two cinematographers, Frederick Charles Wills and his assistant Henry William Mobsby, who produced over thirty films using a camera designed by the Lumière brothers called a *Lumière cinematographe*. The films made by the pair present a variety of topics, including Queensland farmers dipping sheep in arsenic; South Sea Islanders cutting sugarcane; the opening of Queensland's parliament; and a film entitled *Boer War Transvaal Contingent* (1899) , which features the only surviving footage of Australian soldiers departing for the Boer War in South Africa.

An 1896 actuality documentary film of the Melbourne Cup is the first of many screen stories of the Melbourne Cup. The story was subsequently told through Australia's first fully local issue of the Movietone newsreel (see Figure 5.1.2), which featured the famous images of Phar Lap winning the 1930 race. Since 1956, the story has also been told through television news and sporting programs, including the first live television broadcast of the race in 1960. Feature film told Australians the Melbourne Cup story through the *Phar Lap* (1983) film and the biopic *The Cup* (2011). Such media storytelling and retelling reinforces the importance of events like the Melbourne Cup in defining Australia's identity.

FIGURE 5.1.2 Poster for Movietone News, Melbourne Cup Special, 1940s [Source: Museum Victoria]

FIGURE 5.1.1 Still from *South Sea Islanders Cutting Cane* (1899). [Source: John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland]

SALVATION ARMY FILM PRODUCTION

It may surprise modern audiences to know that the Salvation Army was at the forefront of film production in Australia at the turn of the twentieth century. In 1892, the Salvation Army formed a theatrical department of sorts called the Limelight Department. Originally it used slide presentations to accompany Salvation Army speakers, however, it soon adopted the new art of filmmaking. In 1897, the Limelight Department set up Australia's first film studio in Melbourne. In 1900, the Salvation Army premiered *Soldiers of the Cross*, which included thirteen short films, more than 200 slides, orations, hymns and music. It is interesting that even at this early stage in Australian screen storytelling, filmmakers and producers were using the medium (and others) to publicise their ideas, philosophies and values, ultimately to recruit people into the Salvation Army.

FILMMAKING IN THE EARLY 1900s

In the early 1900s, Australians were telling fictional narratives in short film format. However, in 1906 the Australian filmmaker Charles Tait produced what is widely acknowledged as the world's first feature film, *The Story of the Kelly Gang*. The film ran for between forty and sixty minutes, depending on the speed of the projection. In the following five years, film production in

Australia boomed. Between 1906 and 1928, 150 feature films were made. In 1911, 52 narrative fiction films were released. In the 1920s, despite still making films like *A Girl of the Bush* (1921) (see Figure 5.1.3), audiences were starting to prefer films from the USA. This level of film production would not be achieved again until 1975.

FIGURE 5.1.3 *A Girl of the Bush* (1921).

BUSHRANGER FILMS

Many of these early films featured bushranger stories and, in what may have been an early recognition of perceived media influence, the South Australian, New South Wales and Victorian governments banned such stories. The governments believed that bushranger films glorified crime and might erode people's respect for the law. In 1917, soon after the bushranger film ban, federal film censorship officially began with the appointment of a three-person, part-time censorship board based in Melbourne. This board was the forerunner to the Office of Film and Literature Classification, which has now become the Classification Board. While the motivation of institutions like the Classification Board is not to tell stories, they are definitely influential in shaping them.

> The story of Ned Kelly and his gang has been told by every generation of Australians since Kelly's death in the Melbourne Gaol in 1880. The various tellings of the story—through newspapers, radio, television, feature film and online—vary in their support or condemnation of Ned Kelly. However, all seem to have contributed to the Kelly mythology.

Frank Hurley

Frank Hurley was a Sydney-born filmmaker, photographer and adventurer. In the early 1900s, he began to earn a reputation for the high quality and technicality of his photos. In December 1911, he travelled to Antarctica on an expedition led by Douglas Mawson to shoot the documentary film *Home of the Blizzard* (1913). In 1915–1916, Hurley documented Ernest Shackleton's Antarctic expedition in *In the Grip of Polar Ice* (1917), bringing the world the first images of the wild and spectacular South Pole. After returning from the Antarctic, Hurley joined the Australian Imperial Force and became Australia's first official war photographer, documenting the experiences of the Australian forces on the Western Front during the First World War and later photographed the Second World War as well. After the war, Hurley became a successful cinematographer for Cinesound, working with the renowned Australian director Ken G. Hall on feature films including *On Our Selection* (1932) and *The Silence of Dean Maitland* (1934).

STORY AS HISTORY

While Hurley is remembered for his brilliant cinematography and still photography, he is also a controversial figure in the history of Australian screen stories. During the First World War, Hurley manipulated images of war scenes from the Western Front to give audiences what he considered to be a more realistic view. He used the technique of combining negatives of several photographs to make a composite (see Figure 5.1.4). The planes, explosions and both sets of soldiers climbing out of the trenches were taken from the negatives of different photographs (see Figures 5.1.5, 5.1.6 and 5.1.7) and superimposed to create an image showing Australian soldiers under heavy attack as they leave the trenches to advance against the enemy.

FIGURE 5.1.4 Frank Hurley, Over the Top [Source: State Library of NSW, picture collection image number 77]

FIGURE 5.1.5 Frank Hurley, Shrapnel Bursting amongst Reconnoitering Planes. One of the images Hurley used to create the composite image shown in Figure 5.1.4 [Source: State Library of NSW, picture collection image number 45]

FIGURE 5.1.6 Frank Hurley, Wave of Infantry Men Going over the Top. One of the images Hurley used to create the composite image shown in Figure 5.1.4 [Source: State Library of NSW, picture collection image number 41]

FIGURE 5.1.7 Frank Hurley, Men Leaving a Trench. One of the images Hurley used to create the composite image shown in Figure 5.1.4 [Source: Australian War Memorial Collection]

Australia's official war historian Charles Bean disapproved of the practice and referred to the images as fakes. Hurley explained his reasoning for using the composites in *Australian Photo Review*:

> None but those who have endeavoured can realise the insurmountable difficulties of portraying a modern battle by the camera. To include the event on a single negative, I have tried and tried, but the results are hopeless. Everything is on such a vast scale. Figures are scattered—the atmosphere is dense with haze and smoke—shells will not burst where required—yet the whole elements of a picture are there could they but be brought together and condensed.

Learning activity

FACT OR FICTION?

Access the archive collections of Frank Hurley's photographs online at the Australian War Memorial and the State Library of New South Wales. You will notice that many do not show action. However, they do portray the death, destruction and horror of the First World War. After looking at the images and considering both Frank Hurley's and Charles Bean's arguments about the photos, answer these questions:

- Are Frank Hurley's composite images an early form of fake news or are they a legitimate representation of a Western Front battle in the First World War? Explain your answer.
- Would Hurley's non-composed photos have communicated the horror of the war and the bravery of the ANZACs just as well as the composite image? Choose two photos to download and refer to in your answer.

5.2 Creating and telling Australian stories

Creating and telling Australian stories is important for Australia's economic, social and cultural wellbeing and is influenced by many factors.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE AUSTRALIAN SCREEN INDUSTRY

In 2016, a report by Screen Australia, 'Screen Currency: Valuing Our Screen Industry', highlighted the economic, social and cultural value of the Australian film television and online screen industry.

ECONOMIC

Screen Australia estimates that the screen industry contributed around A$3 billion dollars annually to Australia's economy in 2014/15 as well as 25 304 full-time jobs. This figure includes the film and television content that is under Australian creative control, worth A$2.6 billion and 20 000 full-time jobs. It is important to note, however, that this amount does not include the activity and revenue of the advertising industry.

The report estimated the industry also contributed to the international tourism industry or around 230 000 tourists, whose estimated expenditure was A$725 million. Australia also exported content (feature films, television dramas and documentaries) and this was worth around A$252 million, excluding reality television and sport.

SOCIAL OR AUDIENCE VALUE

The report found that Australian audiences value Australian content—they recognise and appreciate its uniqueness and diversity. Ninety-eight per cent of respondents watch Australian content, which makes up over half the viewing of nearly 65 per cent of people. Australian audiences overwhelmingly believe that the Australian Government should support the screen sector. Australian audiences place an estimated value of A$17 billion annually on local screen content.

CULTURAL VALUE

The report also indicated that Australian screen stories do not just have economic and social benefits but also cultural benefits, both in Australia and worldwide. Australian audiences place an 'option value' on the benefit of having the choice to view Australian content even if they do not currently watch it—this is estimated to be worth A$511 million annually. There is also an 'existence value', which is worth A$415 million annually—this is the

FIGURE 5.2.1 Long-running Australian children's television program, *Play School*

value that Australian audiences place in others being able to watch Australian content (e.g. adults valuing children's access to Australian programs such as *Play School*, shown in Figure 5.2.1).

There is also the value Australia gains from the global exposure of screen industry talent and Australian destinations, stories and culture. This exposure strengthens Australia's international brand, beyond tourism. This value is sometimes called 'soft diplomacy', whereby the ability to shape preferences and opinions of others is via appeal and attraction.

The cultural benefits of Australian content can also be measured qualitatively as follows:

- Instrumental value: Direct social and/or economic impact from screen stories such as *Go Back to Where You Came From* and *That Sugar Film*.

- Institutional value: The extent to which Australian content can help organisations or institutions gain trust and esteem by engaging with the public, especially from films such as *Gallipoli* (1981).
- Intrinsic value: The capacity for Australian content to entertain, dazzle, challenge, elicit emotion and engage imagination on a subjective level; for example, from screen stories such as *The Sapphires* (2012) and *Brides of Christ*.

THE FUTURE OF THE INDUSTRY

Screen Australia COO, Fiona Cameron has stated: 'To plan where we're going, we need to understand where we've been. Digital innovation and the vast challenges and possibilities of the online space are rapidly changing the screen industry landscape—from SVOD to YouTube, online gaming to virtual reality platforms—making this a timely report'.

> We're seeing success after success here and overseas, stemming from big ideas and bold choices. The strength of a story so utterly Australian as *The Dressmaker*—about a Paris-trained dressmaker tackling 1950s country town parochialism with her Singer sewing machine—was enough to cross cultural boundaries opening to audiences in 26 countries beyond our shores. And now we have Australia's first onscreen Indigenous superheroes appearing on Netflix across the US in *Cleverman*. The world is watching us.
>
> Screen Australia, Screen Currency: Valuing Our Screen Industry

Learning activities

1 Do you agree with the authors of the Screen Currency report that Australian content has cultural benefits? Justify your response and provide examples in your answer.

2 Imagine an Australia in which there were no Australian screen stories.
   - What content would be on our screens?
   - How would that affect Australian culture and identity?

INFLUENCE OF CLASSIFICATION ON AUSTRALIAN STORIES

In classifying Australian films and computer games, the Classification Board must take into account the *Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995* and the National Classification Code.

CLASSIFICATION ACT 1995

Under the Classification Act, each of the following matters must be taken into account in classifying films and computer games:

- The standards of morality, decency and propriety generally accepted by reasonable adults.
- The literary, artistic or educational merit (if any) of the publication, film or computer game.
- The general character of the publication, film or computer game, including whether it is of a medical, legal or scientific character.
- The persons or class of persons to or amongst whom it is published or is intended or likely to be published.

THE NATIONAL CLASSIFICATION CODE

Under the National Classification Code, classification decisions are to give effect, as far as possible, to the following principles:

- Adults should be able to read, hear and see what they want.
- Minors should be protected from material likely to harm or disturb them.
- Everyone should be protected from exposure to unsolicited material that they find offensive.
- The need to take account of community concerns about:
  - depictions that condone or incite violence, particularly sexual violence and
  - the portrayal of persons in a demeaning manner.

The needs of the Australian public are varied and the guidelines seek to strike a balance between permitting adults to make choices about their viewing, gaming and reading habits, while at the same time respecting that others need not see material that they find confronting and protecting children from inappropriate content.

Classification in action

The Dressmaker (2015) received a classification of M with the consumer advice: mature themes, violence, coarse language and sexual references. Figure 5.2.2 shows how the Classification Board classified each classifiable element of the film. If the story were presented differently, the classification may also have been different. For example, if the story had involved a drug-addicted character and this was depicted at a high-impact level, it is reasonable to assume that the classification would have been MA15+ with the consumer advice: mature themes, violence, coarse language and drug use. If the violence and sex were high impact as well, then the classification would probably have been R18+ with the consumer advice: high-level violence and sexual themes, drug use and coarse language. Both of these re-imaginings of *The Dressmaker* would result in a different story being told to different audiences.

	Very mild impact	Mild impact	Moderate impact	Strong impact	High impact
Themes			✓		
Violence			✓		
Language			✓		
Drug use		✓			
Nudity					
Sex			✓		

FIGURE 5.2.2 Classification for *The Dressmaker* (2016)
[Source: Australian Classification]

Learning activity

Log on to the Australian Classification website and download the classification guidelines for film (G, PG, M, MA 15+, R18+, X18+) or computer games (G, PG, M, MA 15+, R18+).

Now think of three films or computer games that you know well. Find out the original classification for each. Your task now is to change the classification of each film or computer game by changing the content. You may need to change the basic story or add or delete certain scenes. Change each of your three films or computer games into G, M and MA15+ versions.

FUNDING AUSTRALIAN SCREEN STORIES

Having a good understanding of Australian media stories requires an understanding of the context in which these stories are produced. Media productions take place within defined boundaries. Television series and films are produced within certain budgetary guidelines which, in turn, will affect the creative decisions directors and producers make.

> Drama in terms of Australian screen stories refers to fictionalised narrative stories. These stories include dramas like police shows (*East West 101*), relationship dramas (*Offspring*) and narrative comedies (*Upper Middle Bogan*).

According to Screen Australia's 2015/16 Drama Report, Australian television producers made 561 hours of drama at a cost of A$376 million. That is an average cost of A$670 232 per hour in 2015–16. Australians produced twenty-nine feature films at a cost of A$194 million at an average of A$6.7 million per film. Producing screen stories is a costly business and those who provide the money do so with expectations and demands, which, in some cases, will affect the creative decisions made in the production process. Sometimes the funding will even decide what stories will feature in the film or television drama produced.

FIGURE 5.2.3 *ANZAC Girls*

FIGURE 5.2.4 *The Waler: Australia's Great War Horse* (2015)

FUNDING 'EVENTS'—GALLIPOLI LANDING CENTENARY

Leading up to the 100th anniversary of the Gallipoli landing in 2015, several television networks commissioned drama and documentary productions about Gallipoli and the ANZACS. This meant that in 2015 Australian screens featured several ANZAC stories including *Gallipoli*, *Deadline Gallipoli* and *ANZAC Girls* (see Figure 5.2.3). Those three programs represent over eighteen hours of production and approximately A$15 million dollars of production cost. This can be viewed in two ways. If that money has been allocated to stories about the First World War, then it will not be allocated to stories about something else. So something that is happening in the Australian community has a big influence on what stories do and do not get told. A second way of looking at this might be that, if the commemoration did not happen, then maybe that A$15 million dollars would not have been spent on television storytelling at all.

The Waler: Australia's Great War Horse

The documentary film *The Waler: Australia's Great War Horse (*2015), which screened on ABC television in 2015, tells the story of the horses that served in the Australian Light Horse during the First World War. The story is both interesting and moving as it explains the heroism of the men and the Walers and the heartbreak of the soldiers when forced to put down their horses after the army decided that it was too expensive to bring them home. The documentary was commissioned as part of the ANZAC Centenary Commemorations and partly financed by the Department of Veteran's Affairs. It was developed and produced in association with the ABC, the Australian Government through Screen Australia and the West Australian Government through Screenwest. It is arguable that without the ANZAC Centenary Commemorations, the funding would not have been available and this Australian screen story might never have been told.

FUNDING SOURCES

Australian screen stories are funded by various sources ranging from government funding bodies like Film Victoria through to private investors. According to Screen Australia's Drama Report 2015/2016, the past five-year average funding for feature film and television drama production can be broken up as follows:

FUNDING SOURCES FOR FEATURE FILMS AND TELEVISION DRAMAS	
FEATURE FILM	
Government funding (including federal and state agencies)	12%
Australian private investors	4%
Producer offset (an incentive in the form of a tax rebate)	29%
Australian film and television industry	15%
Foreign investors	41%
TELEVISION DRAMA	
Government funding (including federal and state agencies)	9%
Australian private investors	<1%
Producer offset (an incentive in the form of a tax rebate)	12%
Australian film and television industry	61%
Foreign investors	16%

Screen Australia figures show that foreign investors have provided the highest proportion of funding for feature films. Foreign investment can include backing from major studios and co-productions being funded by both foreign and Australian investment. The producer offset is a tax concession that allows film and television producers to claim tax rebates on the money they have borrowed from banks and financiers to make their stories.

The figures relating to television drama tell quite a different story. Over the same five-year period since 2010, the Australian film and television industry provided 61 per cent of the funding for television drama. The majority of this comes from the free-to-air television networks. In the 2015–16 financial year, there were fifty-seven television drama titles produced. The ABC financed twenty-one of the fifty-seven. Subscription television financed six titles and SBS, streaming video on demand makers, distributors and production companies provided the rest of the money.

The intention of the Producer Offset Tax is to encourage and increase screen production in Australia. The tax incentive offers producers and companies a generous tax offset if their production meets certain conditions. Some of these include having significant Australian content (including the subject of the film, who is involved and its locations), being an Australian co-production and having had production expenditure in Australia (such as for land use or goods and services used during the three stages of production).

Learning activities

1   The Producer Offset Tax is only one aspect of the three offsets available under the Australian Screen Production Incentive. Research what the purpose and aims of the Australian Screen Production Incentive are, including what other benefits are involved.

2   Create a PMI chart for the Producer Offset Tax.

PLUS	MINUS	INTERESTING

3   What things about Australia would you promote to international producers to entice them to make films here? Make a short promotional video or develop an oral 'pitch' to highlight our nation's best features.

4   What is your opinion of Australian films?

5   Research the types of films that are likely to be funded by the film bodies (e.g. Film Victoria, ScreenWest, Screen New South Wales, etc.) in different Australian states. What seems to get priority?

6   In your opinion, is it more important to make films that 'tell our story' as a nation or ones that are enjoyable and profitable?

CONTENT REGULATION

The average cost of producing an hour of Australian television drama is over A$600 000, while many Australian dramas cost well over A$1 million per hour to produce. The average cost of buying a drama from the USA is between A$200 000 and A$300 000 per hour. From an economic point of view, it would be cheaper for Australian broadcasters to simply buy screen stories from the USA and Europe. The reason that Australian television free-to-air networks like Channels 2, 7, 9, 10 and SBS and subscription networks like Foxtel™ do not simply buy all of their programming from overseas is due to Australia's legislated rules of content regulation.

The licence conditions for broadcasters specify legislated amounts of Australian content, locally produced drama and children's programming. The intention of such content legislation is to encourage a strong film and television industry in Australia. Having minimum levels of local content written into the broadcaster's licence conditions ensures that jobs are created in the Australian media production industry. It also provides a creative platform through which Australians can tell each other Australian stories. This means that Australian media storytellers can contribute to the cultural identity of Australia. Content regulation includes levels of Australian drama production, documentary production, overall Australian content percentages and specific content quotas for children's programming.

FIGURE 5.2.5 *Nowhere Boys* (Series 3), an Australian television drama series aimed at the teen market, was commissioned and broadcast on the ABC.

AUSTRALIAN PROGRAMMING TRANSMISSION QUOTAS

Australian content for commercial free-to-air television is regulated by the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (BSA), Australian Content Standard (ACS) and Television Program Standard 23—Australian Content in Advertising. The BSA requires all commercial free-to-air television licensees to broadcast an annual minimum transmission quota of Australian programming for both their primary and non-primary channels between 6 a.m. and midnight— 55 per cent Australian programming for primary channels and at least 1460 hours of Australian programming for non-primary channels.

Sub-quotas

In addition to the programming transmission quotas, the Australian Content Standard 2016 regulates and sets out the minimum sub-quotas for the amount of Australian drama, documentary and children's programs that all commercial free-to-air television licensees must broadcast.

Learning activity

Access the Australian Communications Media Authority website and answers the following questions:
- What is the amount of Australian content required on commercial free-to-air television?
- What are the Australian content requirements for Pay TV networks?
- What is the required amount of children's drama on commercial free-to-air television and Pay TV?

Ned Kelly

The story of Ned Kelly and his gang has been told many times and in many media formats. Each telling of the story reinforces Kelly's place in Australian history. Indeed Ned Kelly was even featured as part of the opening ceremony of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games™. While the fictional narratives of the story, presented in film and on television, have generally shown Kelly as an Australian legend and hero, the documentary format has tended to be much more measured in its portrayal.

FILM AND TELEVISION

In 1906, Charles Tait's *The Story of the Kelly Gang* (see Figure 5.2.6) was the first feature length film about Ned Kelly. The 1980 television mini-series *The Last Outlaw* presents Ned Kelly in a romanticised, heroic light. The authorities of nineteenth-century Victoria, particularly the police, are portrayed as corrupt, cruel and doing the bidding of the wealthy English landowners, while Ned and his family represent the downtrodden Irish immigrants who are seeking freedom and a fair go in Australia. The young and handsome actor John Jarratt plays Ned sympathetically. In the 1970 film version of the story, Ned Kelly was played by Rolling Stones lead singer Mick Jagger. In the 2003 feature film version of the Ned Kelly story, Kelly is again portrayed sympathetically, this time by the popular Heath Ledger.

DOCUMENTARY

In 2003, director Mark Lewis released a documentary version of the Ned Kelly story entitled *Outlawed: The Real Ned Kelly*. This telling of the story examines both sides of the argument. Historians and Kelly descendants describe Ned as an Australian version of revolutionaries like Michael Collins or Che Guevara, fighting for freedom, against tyranny. Other historians argue that Kelly was nothing more than a horse thief, bank robber, murderer, police killer and even a terrorist.

It is important to note that in the re-enactment scenes of most documentary tellings of the Ned Kelly story, an unknown actor plays Ned. This allows the audience to concentrate on the information or evidence presented to them. In contrast, it is a convention of the fictional storytelling format to cast popular actors knowing that their popularity and acting ability will help the audience build a relationship with them. When telling real-life stories, this convention can sometimes position the audience to be more sympathetic to the real-life characters than they otherwise would be.

DEATH OF DAN KELLY & STEVE HART

FIGURE 5.2.6 Charles Tait's *The Story of the Kelly Gang* (1906). This early silent film was the precursor of the Australian film industry.

FICTIONAL STORYTELLING VERSUS REAL LIFE

A convention of fictional storytelling is to include some element of romance. Though Kelly was not married and there is no evidence of him having been involved in a relationship with any woman, film director Gregor Jordan throws Heath Ledger's Ned into the arms of Naomi Watts (see Figure 5.2.7). Watts plays the fictional character Julia, a married woman with whom Kelly has a love affair. The romance storyline also gives Ned an alibi for the disputed shooting of Constable Fitzpatrick. The real-life Ned claimed he did not shoot Fitzpatrick because he was not there. Fictional storytelling may also rely on the conventional telling of the Hero's Journey. This kind of storytelling almost guarantees that the central character will be viewed heroically. While there is nothing essentially wrong with producing stories about heroes and their adventures, it might be problematic if audiences read dramatisations of Australian history as documented historical facts.

FIGURE 5.2.7 Director Gregor Jordan included a fictional romance in his version of *Ned Kelly* (2003).

Learning activity

After viewing *Ned Kelly* (2003) and *Outlawed: The Real Ned Kelly*, prepare an analysis of the two texts comparing the fictional and documentary story techniques. In your analysis, consider and discuss how the:

- production elements of camera, acting, *mise en scène*, editing, lighting and sound have been used by both directors to engage their audience in different ways
- story elements including character development and point of view are used by the filmmakers to engage their audiences. (Note: In the documentary format, the interviewees and experts can also be considered to be characters.)
- audience would have received each story:
  - Would there be a different expectation from the audience from the fictional narrative and the documentary narrative?
  - Do you think that audiences would view the fictionalised version of the Ned Kelly story as entertainment full of artistic licence or as a version of reality?
  - While the documentary version attempts to present a factual telling of the story, many more people will see the fictional version. Does this mean that the fictional storytelling of real events will have the most influence over what people believe to be true?

ANZAC and Gallipoli stories

ANZAC Day on 25 April is a national holiday of remembrance. The day was chosen because it was when Australian troops landed at Gallipoli. Typing 'Gallipoli' into the search engine of the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia brings up hundreds of results. The story of the ANZACS and the Gallipoli landing has been told in countless feature films, television dramas, documentaries, news reports, ANZAC services broadcasts, radio documentaries, newspaper and magazine supplements, books, graphic novels and online. It would be impossible to discuss the complete telling of the story by everyone who has attempted to tell it. It is a story that is said to have forged Australia's national identity.

SCREEN VERSIONS

The telling of the ANZAC story on screen has changed over time, reflecting in part the points of view of different generations.

The Hero of The Dardanelles

The first screen version of the Gallipoli landing was made at Tamarama Bay near Sydney less than a month after the actual landing took place by director Alfred Rolfe for his feature film, *The Hero of The Dardanelles* (1915). Similar to all of the Gallipoli stories that were to follow, the film tells of the patriotism and bravery of the ANZACS. In the film Will Brown, played by Guy Hastings, enlists in the Australian Army, gets engaged to his sweetheart, encourages his mates to join up, trains with fellow recruits, travels to Egypt and then—along with his brave comrades—attacks the Turkish lines at Gallipoli. The film was made with the support of the Minister of Defence. Troops from the army training camp at Liverpool were used in the production of the film.

The Hero of The Dardanelles was positively received by audiences and used as a recruiting tool for the war effort. The philosophy of the film can be seen in the scene where Will's mates give him a send-off in an inner-city pub. In the scene, Will encourages his friends to join up and puts a poster on the wall of the hotel that reads 'He did his duty. Will you do yours?' An pacifist tears the poster down, prompting Will to throw him out of the pub. The film portrays such anti-war sentiments as cowardly and unpatriotic.

FIGURE 5.2.8 *The Hero of the Dardanelles* (1915)

Will's behaviour reflects the sentiments of many Australians and the Australian government at the time, as both prime minister Joseph Cook and opposition leader Andrew Fisher had pledged Australia's support for Britain should war be declared. In a speech in July 1914 Fisher stated: 'Should the worst happen, after everything has been done that honour will permit, Australians will stand beside the mother country to help and defend her to our last man and our last shilling'. Other films to portray the same pro-war sentiment followed, including *Within Our Gates* (1915) and *The Martyrdom of Nurse Cavell* (1916).

Forty Thousand Horsemen

In 1939, Australia was again at war to support Great Britain and, in 1940, Charles Chauvel made his First World War epic *Forty Thousand Horsemen*. This film featured Chips Rafferty, Grant Taylor and Pat Twohill as members of the Australian Light Horse fighting in Sinai. The film culminates in the famous Australian victory at Beersheba when the Light Horse charged the Turkish/German emplacements.

FIGURE 5.2.9 *Forty Thousand Horseman* (1940)

The prologue of Chauvel's film sets the tone of the story to come.

> When Germany stretched greedy hands towards
> the Middle East in the war of 1914–1918,
> a great cavalry force came into being.
>
> They were the men from Australia and New
> Zealand—The ANZACS—the 'Mad Bushmen'—the
> men from 'Downunder'. Call them what you
> will—their glories can never grow dim.
>
> They met the Germanised Army in the burning
> desert of Sinai.
>
> They fought and suffered to emerge
> triumphant—the greatest cavalry force of
> modern times.
>
> To these dauntless riders and their gallant
> horses this story is dedicated. To them with
> pride, their own sons are saying today—
>
> 'The torch you threw to us, we caught
> and now our hands will hold it high.
> It's glorious light will never die!'

Forty Thousand Horsemen, similar to films before it, depicts the ANZACS as brave and effective soldiers. The film acts as a rallying cry for Second World War recruitment. It received praise from both critics and the public and became Australia's first worldwide feature film success, winning critical acclaim in both London and New York and screening in countries from Singapore to Denmark. *Forty Thousand Horsemen* confirmed in Australian hearts the bravery and honour of the First World War ANZACS and stirred the next generation into action in the Second World War. In doing so, the film represents the ANZACS as anti-authoritarian larrikins who saved their discipline for the fields of battle. These sentiments would be echoed in later ANZAC stories, however, the theme of unquestioning support for Britain would change dramatically.

FIGURE 5.2.10 *Gallipoli* (1981)

Gallipoli

One of the most recent and well-known tellings of the ANZAC legend is Peter Weir's *Gallipoli*, starring Mel Gibson (Frank) and Mark Lee (Archy). While remaining true to the honour of the ANZACS, *Gallipoli* seriously questions not only the British command of the campaign but also Australia's decision to go to war at all. Peter Weir represents the war as the futile and horrific waste of life that many modern Australians believed it to be. According to the Australian War Memorial, 416 809 men enlisted to fight in Europe and the Middle East. Sixty thousand of them were killed and 156 000 were wounded, gassed or taken prisoner. The death toll of 60 000 represented 12 per cent of Australia's population. In an early scene from the film, Archy and Frank walk across an outback desert as far away from the fields of France and the shores of Turkey as Weir can depict. They argue about why Frank should or shouldn't join up.

```
                ARCHY
  I've got mates who'd be lucky to run
  the hundred in 12 and they're gonna
  do their bit. So why shouldn't you?

                FRANK
  Because it's not our bloody war!

                ARCHY
  What do you mean not our war?

                FRANK
  It's an English war. It's got
  nothing to do with us.

                ARCHY
  You know what you are? You're a
  bloody coward.
```

Like so many young men, they both enlist despite Archy being underage and Frank seeing no logical sense to go. When they get to Egypt the Australian attitude of anti-establishment larrikinism is represented in a scene reminiscent of *Forty Thousand Horsemen* when Frank and his mates mock the British officers by wearing monocles and putting on British accents. Later in the film, the British are portrayed as ruthlessly using the ANZACS as cannon fodder to create a diversion for an English landing further up the peninsula. Weir uses the camera, actors, music and editing to bring the film to its climax at the tragic Battle of the Nek. He tells, reflecting the modern Australian perspective, that were it not for the British command, the horror of the Gallipoli campaign might not have happened.

> I wanted to make a film about the first World War … The remembrance of the battle of Gallipoli was a very stuffy, almost religious sort of ceremony that would occur every year in school, and we really didn't know what it was all about. So I did some research, actually went to Gallipoli, which is one of the only battlefields in the world that's still intact because it's still a military zone. There were bullets and knives and forks and bottles … There was no one else there, so I went down to the beach, stripped down and had a swim, and the first thing I thought when I was underwater was, 'This is where you would want to be if you were being shelled,' and I wrote a scene based on that … then I walked up shrapnel alley on to the battlefield and thought 'I've got to make this!' You know it's one thing to read about the moon and going to the moon, but it's another thing entirely to go to the moon yourself … It gave me a sense of time and reality in a very eerie way. Later, I went to Egypt and went inside one of the pyramids, and there saw graffiti written by Australians who were there during the war: 'A.I.F., Australia, 1915,' you know.
>
> Peter Weir, *The Hollywood Interview*, Alex Simon

Learning activity

Watch T*he Hero of the Dardanelles, Forty Thousand Horsemen* and *Gallipoli* and describe how the representations in the film send very different messages to the audiences about the ANZACS' involvement in the First World War.

Gender and Australian screen stories

> Who is telling Australian stories? And whose stories are being told? Are women adequately represented in key creative roles and positions of influence in the Australian screen industry? If not, why not, and what can we do about it?
>
> *Gender Matters*: *Women in the Australian Screen Industry*, Screen Australia, 2015

Many in the film and television industry argue that there is a gender bias on Australian screens and behind Australian cameras. On screen, particularly on television, stories about Australian women are arguably at the highest levels we have ever seen. The success of television series like *Offspring*, *Wentworth* and *Love Child* seems to indicate that Australian audiences want to watch stories about Australian women as much as stories about Australian men. Not only is there an increase in the number of programs featuring women, arguably they feature stronger characters than those of previous television generations.

TELEVISION STORIES

Consider the Australian television drama series *Offspring*, which follows the lives of Nina Proudman and her extended family. The main character Nina, played by Asher Keddie, is an obstetrician. Her sister Billie runs the family real estate business with her father Darcy. They are capable women, as is their mother Geraldine. If anything, it is the Proudman men, Darcy and brother Jimmy, who are the less stable characters.
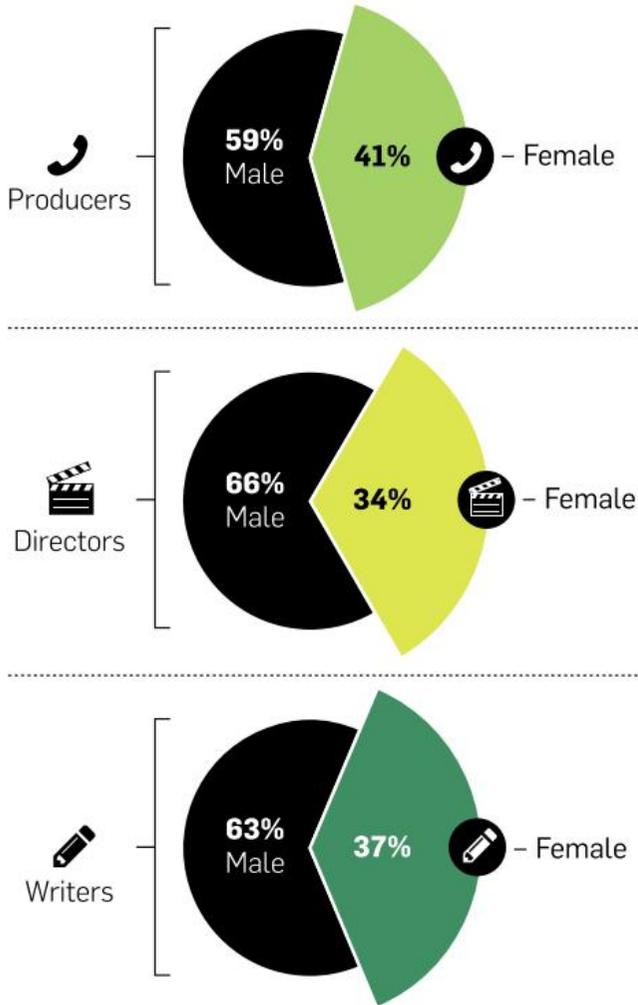
Increasingly, Australian television dramas, even those with male lead characters like *Rake*, are presenting women as strong and capable. In *Rake*, Richard Roxburgh's character Cleaver Greene is the most flawed character in the show, while the female characters including his ex-wife Wendy, girlfriend Missy and fellow barrister Scarlett are all represented as strong, capable and independent.

FIGURE 5.2.11 A scene with Billie (Kat Stewart) [left] and Nina (Asher Keddie) [right] Proudman, *Offspring*
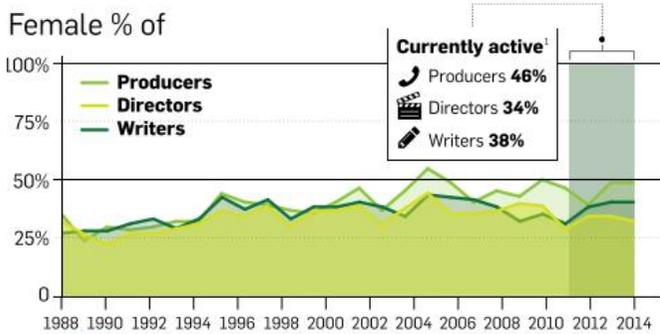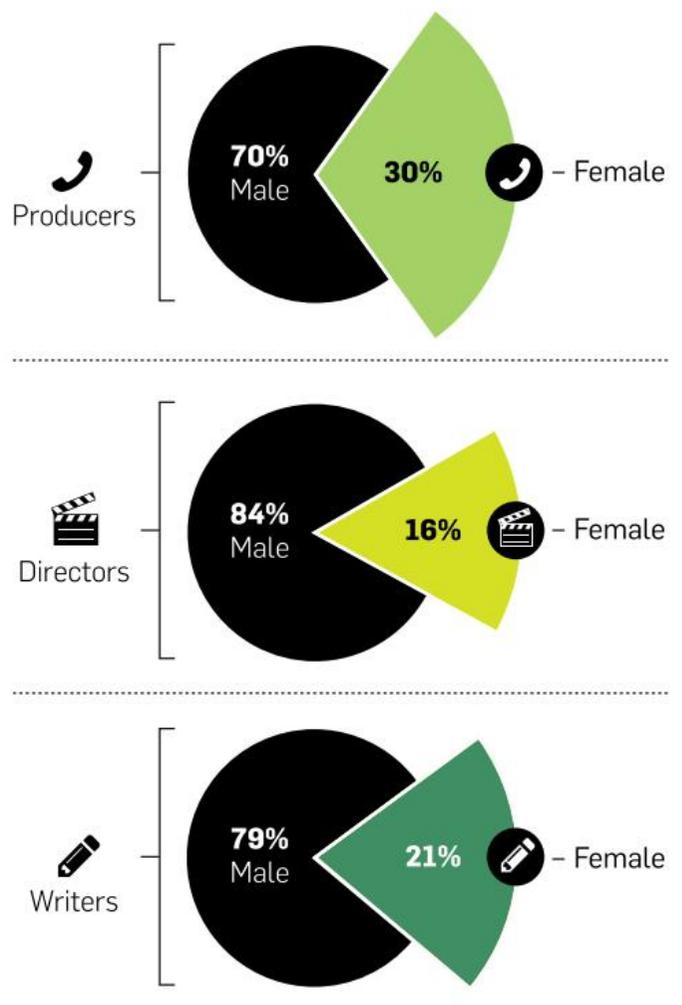
Women working in key creative roles
Documentaries 1988-2014

Producers
59% Male
41%
– Female

Directors
66% Male
34%
– Female

Writers
63% Male
37%
– Female

Female % of

— Producers
— Directors
— Writers

Currently active[1]
Producers **46%**
Directors **34%**
Writers **38%**

100%
75%
50%
25%
0

1988 1990 1992 1994 1996 1998 2000 2002 2004 2006 2008 2010 2012 2014

Source: **Screen Australia** analysis of credits for Australian documentaries made between July 1988 and June 2014
[1] Based on documentaries made between July 2009 and June 2014
Infographic: **Anthony Calvert**

www.screenaustralia.gov.au/research

Women working in key creative roles
Film 1970-2014

Producers
70% Male
30%
– Female

Directors
84% Male
16%
– Female

Writers
79% Male
21%
– Female

Female % of

— Producers
— Directors
— Writers

Currently active[1]
Producers **32%**
Directors **16%**
Writers **23%**

100%
75%
50%
25%
0

1970 1975 1980 1985 1990 1995 2000 2005 2010 2015
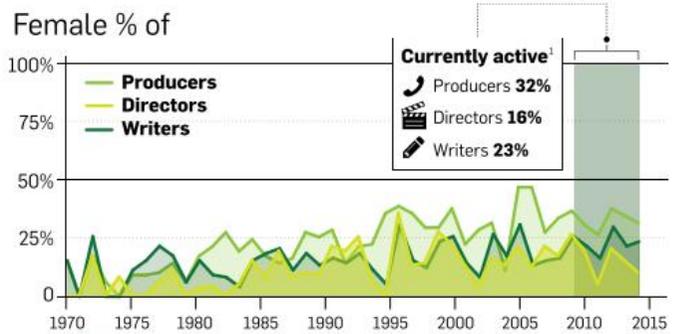
Source: **Screen Australia** analysis of credits for Australian feature films shot between July 1970 and June 2014
[1] Based on films made between July 2009 and June 2014
Infographic: **Anthony Calvert**

www.screenaustralia.gov.au/research

FIGURE 5.2.12 Infographic from Screen Australia report, *Gender Matters: Women in the Australian Screen Industry*, showing the proportions of women and men in key roles in documentary making and filmmaking from 1988 to 2014

Female characters are now starting to feature in screen roles that would have previously been written as male, such as the character of Robin, played by Elisabeth Moss in the 2013 drama *Top of the Lake*. This short series tells the story of a detective returning to her hometown, where she investigates the mysterious death of a young local girl.

FILM STORIES

Current Australian film has examples like director Jocelyn Moorhouse's *The Dressmaker*, which tells the story of a strong woman surviving and triumphing in the hostile environment of a small country town. *The Dressmaker* was based on Rosalie Ham's novel and written for the screen by Jocelyn Moorhouse and P.J. Hogan. It was directed by Moorehouse and produced by Sue Maslin. The original story, the producing, the writing of the screenplay and the direction of the film were all undertaken by women. The result is an entertaining and financially successful Australian screen story, which also has a female lead character.

WOMEN BEHIND THE CAMERA

Figure 5.2.12 shows that women are under-represented in the key creative roles of the Australian screen industry, particularly in feature film. In the five years previous to the report, only 32 per cent of films were produced by women, 23 per cent written by women and 16 per cent directed by women.

Associate Professor Lisa French, in her article 'Does Gender Matter?', published in Issue 14 of the journal *Lumina*, identifies a strong relationship between the gender of the filmmakers and that of their lead characters. Her research of Screen Australia finance found that approved feature films and feature documentaries showed that female directors featured female lead characters or subjects 74 per cent of the time, while male directors featured them only 24 per cent of the time. So it would seem that encouraging more women into the creative roles in our screen industry would result in more Australian screen stories about women. To that end, Screen Australia has developed a five-point plan aimed at achieving a 50 per cent representation of women in creative roles by 2018.

In response to the Gender Matters report, a new program has been established with funding from the federal government to ensure gender equity in the film industry. Screen Australia's Gender Matters: Brilliant Stories and Brilliant Careers initiatives are part of the program.

These initiatives aim to stimulate awareness and increase industry activity around storytelling by women. In the first phase of the project, Screen Australia received 333 applications and now 45 original stories by women across television (16), online (11) and feature film (18) have attracted the funds to enable their creative teams to fast-track the development of their creative concept.

Brilliant Careers also aims to provide support and encourage mentorship schemes. In 2016–17, Screen Australia launched a new program to address the lack of opportunity for entry-level female television screenwriters. The new initiative is called 'Smart for a Girl: Roar'. Twelve places were open to uncredited female writers who will then work with producer Imogen Banks (*Offspring*) and screenwriter Alice Bell (*Puberty Blues*). The women will learn how an idea is developed into series television and about the processes of a writer's room. During the course, the women will be paid.

Learning activities

1   Download *Gender Matters: Women in the Screen Industry* from the Screen Australia website. Summarise Screen Australia's five-point plan to increase the number of women in creative roles in the screen industry.

2   Choose ten Australian-made screen stories. They could include dramas, comedies or documentaries from television (free-to-air or pay), film or online. Undertake an audit of the ten stories to establish how many women worked in the creative roles. Then audit the main characters or subjects to decide if these were presented from a male or female point of view. What conclusions can you make from your audit? Do your results agree with those published by Screen Australia?

5.3 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander screen stories

Prior to the year 2000, most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander screen stories have been told from a white Australian perspective, however, this is beginning to change.

TIMELINE OF SCREEN REPRESENTATIONS

1930s AND 1940s

Up until Charles Chauvel's 1955 feature film *Jedda*, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people had appeared in fictional screen narratives as either incidental characters in the background of the story or as dangerous characters.

In 1936, Chauvel made *Uncivilised*, in which he depicted Indigenous people as dangerous. The story was about the Australian Mounted Police who, according to the opening titles, had to 'penetrate to the heart of this country and learn the movements of the tribes—of these natives wanted for spearing cattle—stealing women—or for murder'.

Similarly, the 1950 film *Bitter Springs* (see Figure 5.3.1), directed by Ralph Smart, tells the story of a pioneering family travelling into a hostile territory full of dangerous natives to establish their cattle property. Fierce battles are fought between the 'native people and the settlers' culminating in a battle in which the Aboriginal people have surrounded the King family, whose only hope of rescue is that the troopers will arrive to save them. If this story sounds familiar, it is probably because it has been told time after time in the American Western genre. In a way, Chips Rafferty as Wally King was a John Wayne–type figure and the Indigenous actors in the film were Australian versions of the Apaches.

FIGURES 5.3.1 AND 5.3.2 *Bitter Springs* (1950) and *Fort Apache* (1948). The Indigenous Australians in early Australian screen stories can be compared to the Native Americans of the Wild West film genre.

Learning activity

Compare the posters for the Australian film *Bitter Springs* and the American Western *Fort Apache* (1948).

- What similarities can you find?
- How have the white characters been portrayed?
- How have the indigenous characters been portrayed?
- Explain the technical codes that were used by the poster artists to achieve these portrayals.

1950s—JEDDA

Jedda was the first fully Australian-funded and -made colour feature film. It was also the first Australian film to be selected for the Cannes Film Festival. However, perhaps, more importantly, it was the first Australian film to cast Indigenous actors in lead roles.

Jedda tells the story of an orphaned Indigenous girl raised by a white woman on a remote cattle station. Jedda, played by Rosalie Kunoth, although happy, is attracted to the mysterious and traditional Marbuck played by Robert Tudawali. Although the casting of Rosalie Kunoth and Robert Tudawali was a significant moment in Australia's film history, *Jedda* still includes stereotyped representations of Aboriginal people. Modern audiences would now find much of the language in the film offensive. Indigenous children are called 'piccaninnies' and Indigenous women are referred to as 'lubras'.

Jedda's boyfriend, Joe, is the son of an Aboriginal stockman and an Afghan woman and was raised and educated by whites. The character is played by white actor Paul Reynall. Reynall was made up in blackface for the role and sounds more like an Englishman educated at Oxford than an Aboriginal boy brought up on a cattle station. Joe is portrayed as a loyal and intelligent young man whose love for Jedda is true while Marbuck is portrayed as wild, uncivilised and dangerous.

In the first scenes of the film, the Indigenous women wail and cry, mourning the death of the white station owner Sara McCann's baby. Mrs McCann, meanwhile,

FIGURE 5.3.3 *Jedda* (1955)

stoically radios the flying doctor service to request a death certificate so that she may bury the child. Chauvel's representation of the black and white characters implies an inner strength in the white Australians and an inner turmoil in the black Australians.

1960s—A CHANGING RACE

In 1964, the ABC screened the documentary *A Changing Race*, produced by Therese Denny. The documentary looked at the issues around assimilation facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. It is probably the first Australian program in which the only people seen on screen are Indigenous.

> This clip highlights the issues Aboriginal peoples in Central Australia faced in the 1960s, as the pressure of assimilation bears down upon them. Removed from their lands, families and cultures and placed into government reserves or Christian missions, Aboriginal peoples suffered great emotional pain and physical hardship.
>
> Jimmy Little's voice-over is aimed at making us accept as fact that Aboriginal people represent a 'dying culture' that can only be saved by the intervention of the missions. All the while the camera voyeuristically follows people on a community. They are shown in European clothes and not engaged in any obvious activity. This is meant to reinforce the idea of a lost or defeated people with little future. It makes for discomforting and dispiriting viewing.
>
> Ironically, with hindsight we can see the assumption of the narration was wrong. Instead of discarding their cultural knowledge, traditions and practices, Aboriginal elders passed on the wealth of their cultural heritage to their descendants so it could survive.
>
> National Film and Sound Archive,
> Curator Liz McNiven, Notes about *A Changing Race*

1980s

In 1987, the ABC established its Indigenous Programs Unit in order to produce high-quality Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander television. Its first programs included *Blackout* (1989–95), *Kam Yan* (1995–96), *Songlines* (1997) and *Message Stick* (1999–current). In 1988 Imparja TV began, concentrating at first on news before broadening into entertainment and education programming.

FIGURE 5.3.4 *Family Rules* (2016), commissioned and shown on NITV

THE 2000s AND BEYOND

National Indigenous Television

National Indigenous Television or NITV started in 2007 and now reaches 2 million viewers per month.

NITV is a television channel run through SBS broadcasting television and produced by Indigenous television-makers and filmmakers. NITV states on its website that it is:

> a channel made by, for and about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Through us, you will discover a channel for all Australians. NITV informs, educates and entertains its Indigenous and non-Indigenous audiences about the issues that matter the most to Indigenous Australians. NITV provides a rich diversity of cultures, languages and talent.

NITV hosts the only daily national news service covering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stories across Australia. The channel also either commissions or acquires content primarily from the Indigenous production sector. One of the most recent commissions was *Family Rules* (see Figure 5.3.4) about an Indigenous Australian family of nine daughters and their mother.

Ten Canoes

Ten Canoes, directed by Rolf de Heer in 2006, was a landmark moment in Australian Indigenous storytelling because it was the first Australian feature film performed in an Indigenous language. The film was a critical and box office success and was screened at various film festivals around the world including Cannes, Berlin and Toronto. The film also inspired the website 12 Canoes.

FIGURE 5.3.5 *Ten Canoes* (2006) was the first Australian Indigenous language feature film.

INDIGENOUS FILM AND SCREEN STORYTELLERS

Increasingly, Indigenous stories in feature films such as *Samson and Delilah* (2009), *The Sapphires* and *Bran Nue Day* (1991) and the acclaimed television drama *Redfern Now* are being told by Indigenous Australians. These Australian stories have been created by Indigenous writers and directors and, unlike Charles Chauvel's white imaginings of what it is like to be an Indigenous Australian, filmmakers like Warwick Thornton (*Samson and Delilah*), Rachel Perkins (*Bran Nue Day, Mabo* 2012*), Leah Purcell (*Black Chicks Talking* 2002*) and Wayne Blair (*The Sapphires*) are bringing Indigenous stories to Australian screens through an Indigenous set of eyes.

'Indigenous media is critical to demystifying Indigenous culture and strengthening our identity,' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Mick Gooda said today.

Marking International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples and the 2012 theme of 'Indigenous Media, Empowering Voices', Commissioner Gooda said Australia's Indigenous media outlets played a valuable role in challenging stereotypes.

'It's often complex for mainstream media to portray Indigenous issues accurately and realistically, and sometimes, despite good intentions, this portrayal reinforces damaging stereotypes,' Commissioner Gooda said.

'Australia's Indigenous media outlets have a vision and breadth which gives Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples the information we need on the things we're interested in, through an Indigenous lens.

'The UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon has called on nations around the world to create and maintain opportunities for Indigenous peoples to articulate their perspectives, priorities and aspirations,' he said.

'I call today on Australian governments to support these efforts by fully implementing the Declaration.

Extract from Australian Human Rights Commission media release 'Indigenous media strengthens identity' media release, 9 August 2012
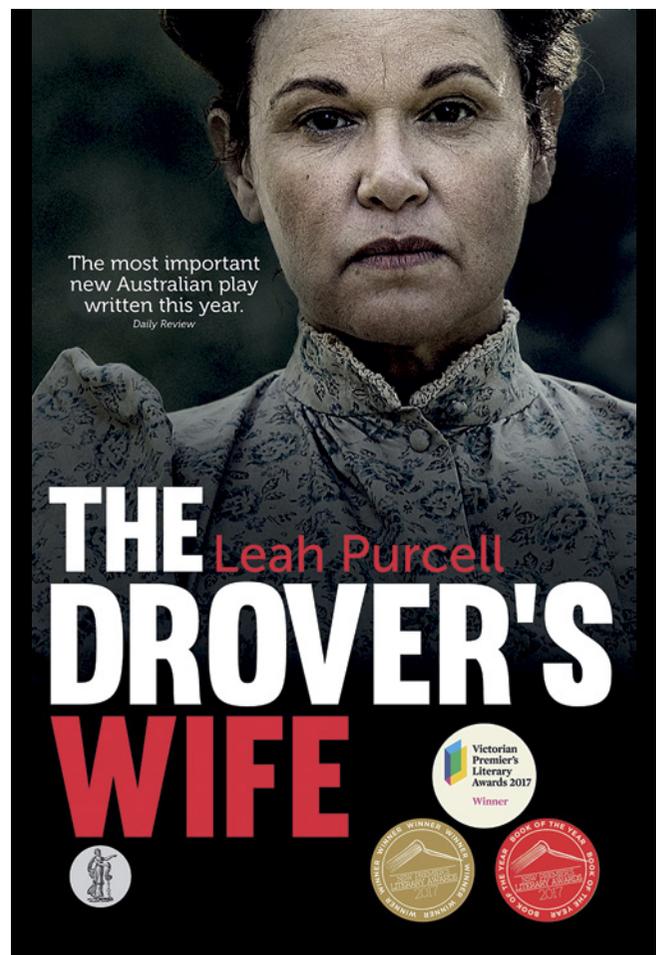
FIGURE 5.3.6 Leah Purcell, in *The Drover's Wife*, a Henry Lawson story she adapted for the theatre. It brings the Indigenous characters sidelined and stereotyped by Lawson to the centre.

Learning activities

1 Watch *Jedda* and answer the following questions:
   - How would you describe the portrayal of black and white Australians in the story?
   - What technical codes and story conventions have been used to communicate these ideas to the audience?
   - How would modern audiences respond to the portrayal of Indigenous Australians in Jedda?

2 Research NITV and profile three of its programs.

3 Explore the website 12 Canoes.
   - Describe the content on the website.
   - What are the stories featured on the site? Explain.

5.4 Diversity of Australian stories

Historically, Australia's early screen stories reflected a very white and very British–Australian identity. Australia is now a very multicultural society—however, this cultural reality is not always reflected in Australian screen stories.

SCREEN STORIES AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

In 2016, Screen Australia undertook a study entitled 'Seeing Ourselves: Reflections on Diversity in TV Drama', examining five years' worth of Australian television drama programming. The research focused on cultural background, disability status and sexual orientation/gender identity.

The study showed that Australia's minorities (people from non-European backgrounds—Asian, African or Middle Eastern) and marginalised communities (people with disabilities) are under-represented in television drama compared to the population. The report also noted that Indigenous Australians are well-represented onscreen compared to their proportion of the population. Both children's programs and comedies generally showed more diversity than drama programs.

CULTURAL BACKGROUND

The Screen Australia report used four categories of cultural background, Anglo-Celtic, European, Non-European and Indigenous, to capture cultural diversity on Australian television. The main findings of the report were that cultural diversity on Australian television is not a reflection of the wider Australian community, as outlined in Figure 5.4.1.

Further findings of the report noted:

- Second-generation Australians from a non–Anglo-Celtic background are 32 per cent of the population, but only represent 18 per cent of the main characters in television dramas.

- Approximately 12 per cent of Australian's population is from a European background, yet only 6 per cent of characters onscreen are European.

- Approximately 17 per cent of Australian's population is from a non-European background, yet only 7 per cent of characters onscreen are non-European.
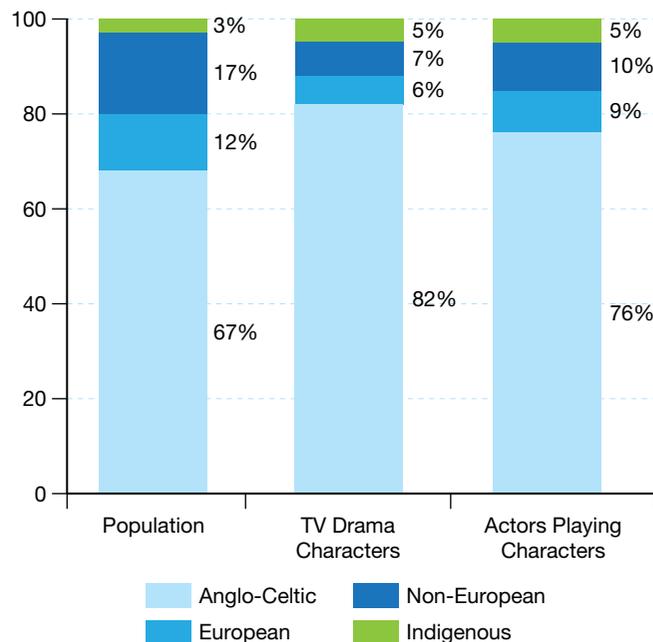
FIGURE 5.4.1 Cultural background of characters and the actors who played them in Australian television drama, compared to the Australian population

- Approximately 3 per cent of Australian's population is Indigenous and 5 percent of characters on screen are Indigenous.

The roles that actors are playing generally reflect the cultural background of the actor. However, there are examples of Anglo-Celtic characters who are played by European or non-European actors—this is sometimes called 'colour-blind casting'. Five per cent of actors identified as Indigenous and this figure matches with the number of Indigenous characters appearing in television dramas.

Programs where the main characters were predominantly from an Anglo-Celtic background is around 36 per cent. This means that 64 per cent of programs have a main cast member from a non–Anglo-Celtic background. Indigenous main characters were clustered in a few programs.

FIGURE 5.4.2 *East West 101*

The study indicated evidence that the stereotyping of minority cultural groups was decreasing and there were examples of all occupational categories for characters of all cultural backgrounds. *East West 101* (see Figure 5.4.2) was a police drama shown on SBS that told the story of a crime squad made up of detectives with varying cultural backgrounds.

DISABILITY STATUS

The Screen Australia report used the *Disability Discrimination Act* to define disability—this incorporates physical, psychological, intellectual and sensory limitations and restrictions and impairments. The main findings of the report were that the number of characters with a disability on Australian television is not a reflection of the wider Australian community, as outlined in Figure 5.4.3. The report noted that at least 10 per cent of programs included a main character with a disability.
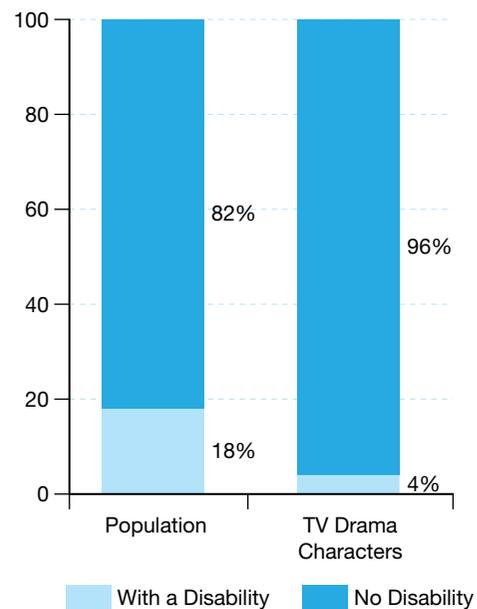
FIGURE 5.4.3 Characters with a disability in Australian television dramas, compared to the Australian population

FIGURE 5.4.4 *Please Like Me*
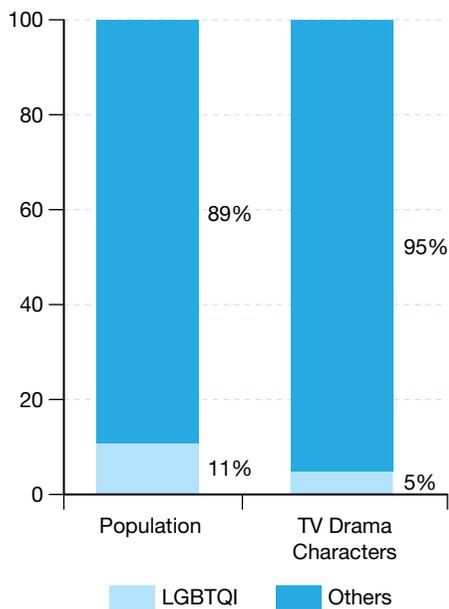
FIGURE 5.4.5 LGBTQI in Australian television drama, compared to the Australian population

SEXUAL ORIENTATION/GENDER IDENTITY

The Screen Australia report used the definitions from the *Sex Discrimination Act* and 'LGBTQI' refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer (or questioning) and/or intersex. The report found that the number of characters who identify as LGBTQI on Australian television is not a reflection of the wider Australian community, as outlined in Figure 5.4.5. The report noted that 27 per cent of programs had one LGBTQI character. *Please Like Me* (see Figure 5.4.4) is one of the rare Australian dramas that includes more than one LGBTQI character, as well as characters with a disability.

Learning activity

Choose one of the areas of diversity outlined in 'Seeing Ourselves: Reflections on Diversity in TV Drama'.

- Conduct your own survey on five television shows you regularly watch. Include genres like reality television, news and live entertainment.
- Do your results agree with Screen Australia's? Explain, referring to your findings and statistics.

5.5 Online stories

Content creators are responding to the fact that audiences are increasingly accessing stories via online streaming and are watching what they want when they want.

ACCESS AND VIEWING STORIES

The way in which audiences access and view screen stories has become varied and very much driven by the user. Teenagers and twenty-somethings view screen stories when and where they want. While feature films are still viewed in large numbers at cinemas, television stories are moving more and more to internet-enabled devices. An example of this is *The Katering Show* (see Figure 5.5.1), a send up of the many cooking shows on mainstream television. *The Katering Show* episodes are of a non-traditional television length, running at around 10 minutes per episode.

Virtually all of our free-to-air and Pay TV networks provide opportunities for audiences to view programs on an internet platform at a time that suits them. Now that streaming content providers have entered the Australian market, the idea that the viewer chooses the time and place of viewing will become more and more the norm rather than the exception. It seems clear from recent surveys that more and more Australians, including those of older generations, are adopting this new mode of viewing.

FIGURE 5.5.1 *The Katering Show*

WATCHING AND VIEWING ONLINE
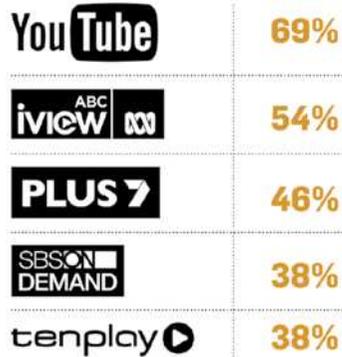
Figure 5.5.2 outlines how and what Australian audiences are watching. Fifty per cent of Australian internet users are watching film and television online. All age groups are now watching content online, with the biggest percentage being in the 25–34 age group.

FIGURE 5.5.2 What Australian audiences are watching online

Did You Know?

Australian audiences are watching online

50% of internet users from all walks of life are watching movies and TV online.

All ages watch online

AGE

14-17: 5%
18-24: 18%
25-34: 22%
35-44: 17%
45-59: 20%
60+: 17%

VOD viewers like local content

1m — 16 Australian YouTube channels have more than 1m subscribers[1]

40%

40% of VOD viewers watch Australian TV series on VOD

42%

42% watch foreign TV series on VOD

Traditional methods are still used to find new content

% of VOD viewers who hear about movies and TV through:

58% Word of mouth
58% TV advertising
44% Program guides
36% Social media

Online Video Services

You Tube   BIGPOND MOVIES   FOXTEL ONDEMAND   Available on iTunes   PLUS tenplay   9 jumpin fetch TV   smh.tv theage.tv

2005   2006   2007   2008   2009   2010

The growth in online viewing has been noted by content creators and we are now seeing the emergence of screen content produced specifically for that. Creators not only include private YouTubers, but also traditional creators like the ABC. The emergence of video-on-demand streaming services like STAN has also seen the production of made-for-streaming content like *Wolf Creek*.

Top 5 services used by VOD viewers:

Service	%
You Tube	69%
iview ABC	54%
PLUS 7	46%
SBS ON DEMAND	38%
tenplay	38%

Hollywood is less dominant online than at the cinema

% of VOD viewers who watch:

- VOD
- Cinema
- Australian movies
- Independent/arthouse movies
- Hollywood movies

20% 21% 33% 31% 21% 59%
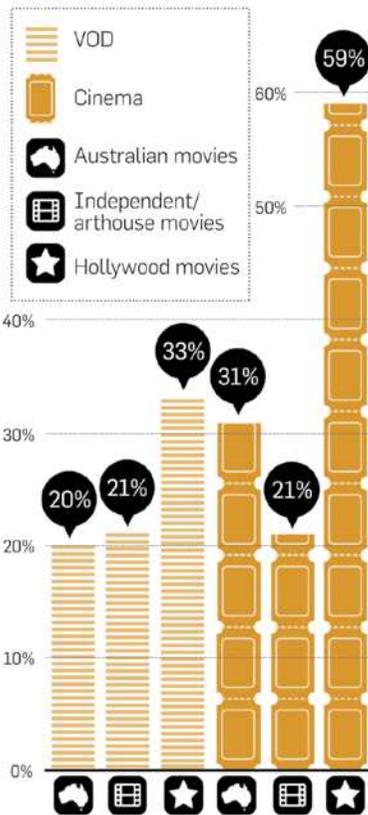
Newcomers are more likely to choose legal services

	< 1 year	1-2 years	2-3 years	3-4 yrs	>4 years
% that have used illegal services	33%	37%	43%	46%	61%
% that only use legal VOD services	67%	63%	57%	54%	39%
% of VOD viewers who have been watching for	17%	29%	18%	11%	25%
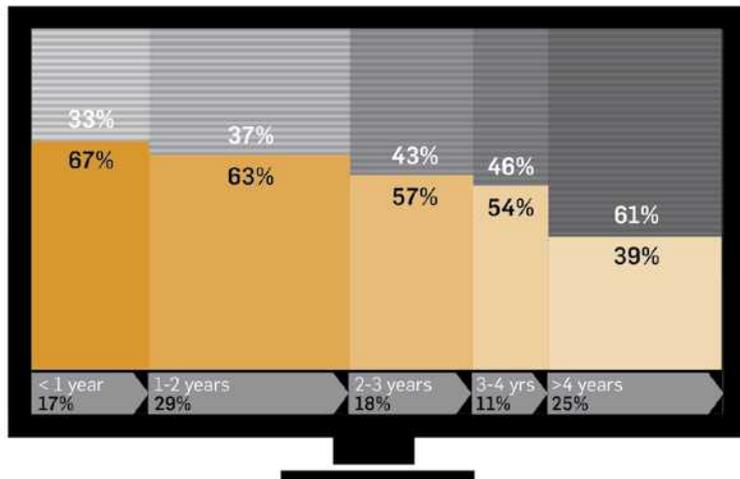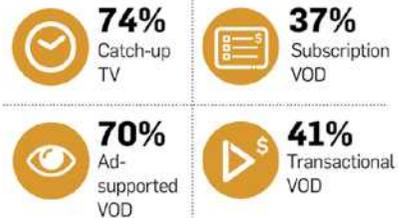
- % of VOD viewers who have been watching for
- % that only use legal VOD services
- % that have used illegal services

Barriers to watching online can be overcome

↓ % who would watch more VOD with:

- 51% Faster internet connection
- 47% Technical knowledge to set up VOD/connect to TV
- 44% More content available
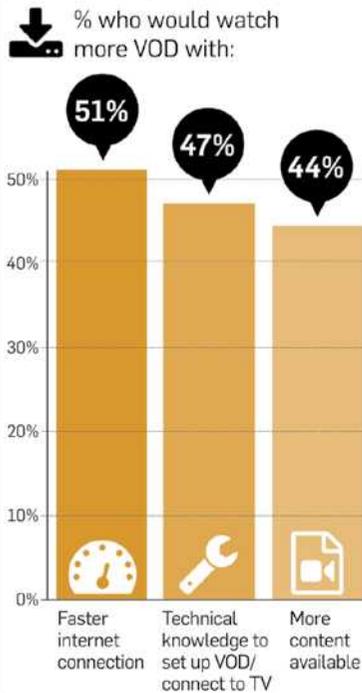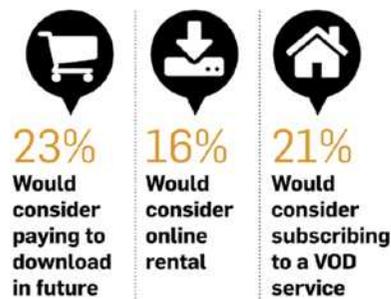
Free-to-view VOD is the most used

Percentage of VOD viewers who use:

- 74% Catch-up TV
- 37% Subscription VOD
- 70% Ad-supported VOD
- 41% Transactional VOD

But there is interest in the paid services

- 23% Would consider paying to download in future
- 16% Would consider online rental
- 21% Would consider subscribing to a VOD service

Quickflix
SBS ON DEMAND — 2011

FOXTEL Go
GET IT ON Google play — 2012

EZYFLIX
FOXTEL Play
vimeo ON DEMAND — 2013

DENDY direct
presto ▶ — 2014

Stan.
NETFLIX — 2015

Screen Australia

Source:
Screen Australia analysis of Nielsen data, 2014
Infographic:
Anthony Calvert
[1] vidstatsx.com/youtube-top-100-most-subscribed-australia-au-channels

www.screenaustralia.gov.au/research

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Australia has a rich culture of narrative screen storytelling. Australian stories have arisen from our history and often reflect the perceived Australian identity of the time in which they appear. The First World War film *Hero of the Dardanelles* represents an Australian identity tied to England. The idea of fighting in Europe in 1915 is presented as the natural Australian response to defending 'Mother England'. The 1981 film *Gallipoli* presents an independent Australian identity in which fighting in Europe is represented as foolish and tragic.

- Australian stories are influenced and shaped by various institutions, including government funding bodies, government and industry regulators, media corporations, network producers and audiences. Few audience members are aware of the influences of government bodies such as Screen Australia or Film Victoria. Their funding decisions often decide which Australian stories make it to our screens and which will not.

- The personal style of media creators including screenwriters, directors and producers influence the way in which narratives reflect reality. Peter Weir's direction of *Gallipoli* concentrates on the friendship of two young men deciding to join up and fight in First World War. Indeed, the greater part of the story takes place in Australia and Egypt. Presenting the pair's journey to Gallipoli and developing their friendship makes the final scene all the more tragic.

- Australian audiences value diverse Australian stories being brought to our cinema, television and online screens. As outlined in the key findings of the Screen Australia report, 'Screen Currency: Valuing Our Screen Industry', Australian screen stories contribute billions of dollars and thousands of jobs to the Australian economy. The report also found that Australians support the idea of government funding for Australian stories.

ASSESSMENT TASKS

1 Undertake a diversity audit of Australian screen stories. Compare the ethnicity of the characters in at least three television programs from each of the channels 2, 7, 9 and 10. Include drama and reality television programs. Compare your results with those of Australia's last census. Present your findings in an essay, short film or podcast.

2 Write an analysis of the way in which two Australian feature films or documentaries have used technical codes and story conventions to create meaning and engage their audience.

3 Create a profile of a famous Australian screen storyteller. You might present this as a magazine piece, academic essay, short film or podcast. It should include an in-depth discussion of the screen storyteller's contribution to Australia's cultural identity.

6 Narrative and ideology

In his autobiography about making the film *The Great Dictator* (1940), a comedy about Adolf Hitler, Charlie Chaplin wrote the following:

> ... halfway through making [the film] I began receiving alarming messages from United Artists. They had been advised by the Hays Office that I would run into censorship trouble. Also the English office was very concerned about an anti-Hitler picture and doubted whether it could be shown in Britain. But I was determined to go ahead, for Hitler must be laughed at.
>
> Charlie Chaplin, *My Autobiography*

The concept of the media's relationship with the audience is discussed at length in this text. This chapter will examine the relationship in reference to audience reception, expectations, experience and response. The chapter will also examine the idea that media narratives contribute to the development of societal values, beliefs and ideologies.

The Great Dictator (1940)

6.1 Media narrative

Media narratives share the characteristics of spoken or written word narratives: they function to entertain, educate, inform and develop the culture of the society in which they are produced.

MEDIA NARRATIVES IN SOCIETY

Most people have been immersed in storytelling from early childhood. Parents tell stories to develop their children's language skills, and educate and entertain them. The stories that parents tell their children are more than the characters and the plots—on a deeper level they are about beliefs, values and ideologies. Narratives often reaffirm broad societal beliefs such as 'Crime doesn't pay' or 'Good will triumph over evil'. They often contain warnings about how people should or should not behave, pointing out the consequences of going against societal morals and beliefs.

Most of our media narratives are created by and distributed to audiences by mainstream media institutions, which broadly reflect the values and beliefs of the society in which the narratives are made. In Australia, 61 per cent of funding for television drama in 2015–2016 came from the Australian film and television industry, with less than 1 per cent coming from private investors. This is indicative of the nature of media narratives—they are mostly told by large media organisations whose motives are profit-driven as much as artistic. In the main, media narratives produced by mainstream institutions like television networks and major film production companies will tend to support the beliefs of the society in which they exist. From time to time, however, media narratives will challenge the beliefs of their own society and prompt debate and social change.

AUDIENCE RECEPTION

The context in which a narrative is viewed can affect the way the audience understand, experience and respond to a film. The Australian film *Animal Kingdom* (2010) tells the fictional story of a Melbourne criminal family who murder two young policemen in a quiet suburban street in an act of retribution. The film won the World Cinema Jury Prize at the 2010 Sundance Film Festival.

Most residents of Melbourne in 1988 remember the cold-blooded ambush murders of two young police constables checking an abandoned car in Walsh Street, South Yarra. Although *Animal Kingdom* is fiction, viewing the film evokes memories of the media narratives from the 1988 real-life crime and criminals involved in it (see Figures 6.1.1 and 6.1.2). While modern filmgoers see the same

FIGURE 6.1.1 A news photo of police on the scene of the 1988 Walsh Street murders in South Yarra, Melbourne

FIGURE 6.1.2 A still from *Animal Kingdom* (2010), showing two police constables checking an abandoned car

fictional narrative as those who experienced the news narratives in Melbourne at the time, the reception context and therefore the viewing experience is very different. While the younger audience reacts to the characters in the film, an older Melbourne audience recalls the criminals that they saw on their televisions and in their courts. Although not a documentary, the film becomes a retelling and reinterpretation of history to some members of the Melbourne audience.

AUDIENCE EXPECTATIONS

Audience members' response to a film in terms of enjoyment or disappointment is often dependent on their expectations of it. If a film is marketed as a terrifying horror, it will satisfy the audience if it is scary and disappoint them if it is not. Teenage girls often choose horror movies as entertainment for sleepovers. Perhaps they choose horror

FIGURE 6.1.3 Bond villain Ernst Stavro Blofeld in *You Only Live Twice* (1967)
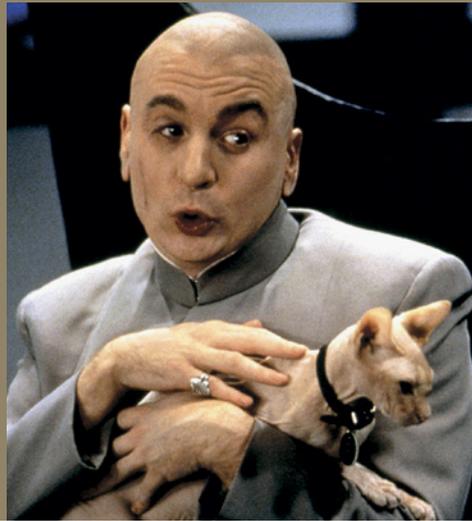
FIGURE 6.1.4 Satirical character Dr Evil from *Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me* (1999)
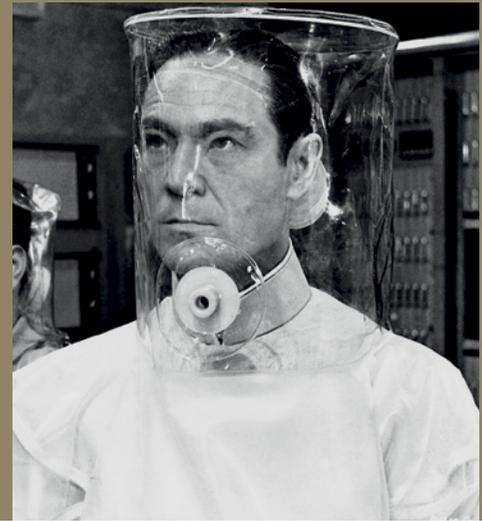
FIGURE 6.1.5 Bond villain Dr No in *Dr No* (1962)

to experience the shared response of fright while sitting safely with their friends. If this is so, the scarier the film is the better the experience will be. Conversely, if the film is not scary it will be received in a different way. While it may not provide fright, it might still provide the group with entertainment. The expected horror film might provide comic entertainment as the group mocks the film and laugh at it together.

AUDIENCE AND SHARED EXPERIENCES

Audiences sometimes respond to a film on a personal level because of who they are and the experiences they have had. Often an audience member will identify strongly with a character or storyline because they have had a similar life experience. A father struggling with his career might identify most closely with the character of Richard in *Little Miss Sunshine* (2006), while his teenage son might more closely identify with Dwayne, a teenage boy experiencing the anxieties and frustrations of adolescence. In *Marathon Man* (1976), John Schlesinger uses the audience's experience of having a dentist drill into their teeth to his advantage by setting a torture scene in a dental chair. As Laurence Olivier brings the drill toward the screaming mouth of Dustin Hoffman, the audience is horrified by their own fear of the experience.

AUDIENCES AND VIEWING FORMATS

Another factor affecting audience response is the medium through which the film is experienced. The physical experience of viewing may affect the way in which an audience member receives a film. The experience of viewing a film on a phone will differ significantly from viewing it in a darkened cinema. The size of the screen and

the limitations of the phone's speakers may not allow the viewer to fully experience elements of the *mise en scène*, including depth of field, colour and sound mixing. A film viewed in a classroom may evoke expectations of study and homework, while viewing a film with friends at a cinema might evoke feelings of enjoyment and entertainment.

AUDIENCE AND GENRE

Modern audiences understand the codes and conventions of the film genre. This allows them to understand and respond to film narratives. Audiences understand that science fiction is set in the future and can therefore believe that in *Blade Runner* (1982) police cars can fly, and actress Sean Young is believable as a robot version of a human. Genre understanding can also encourage audiences to explore themes or relate to a text closely. In *The Truman Show* (1998) director Peter Weir questions the ethics of the reality television genre and explores the themes of identity, belonging and freedom.

Familiarity with a genre also allows the audience to enjoy satire aimed at that genre. Knowledge of James Bond films adds to the audience's enjoyment of the Bond satires, *Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery* (1997) and *Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me* (1999). Mike Myers created Austin Powers by modelling the character Dr Evil (see Figure 6.1.4) on the Bond villains Ernst Stavro Blofeld (Figure 6.1.3) and Dr No (Figure 6.1.5). Humour in the satire genre draws on the audience's knowledge of other film genres and their texts. This referencing of other texts is often referred to as 'intertextuality'.

FILM NARRATIVE AND THE AUDIENCE

The first audience to experience onscreen film did so with a screening by Auguste and Louis Lumière. The Lumière brother's first film was titled *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory* (1895). Predictably, the action consisted of workers leaving the Lumière factory. This was typical of early filmmaking. The audience's fascination came from being able to see moving images on screen. Film subjects at this time included rivers, waterfalls, ski slopes, animals, early motor cars, boats and trains. In *The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station* (1895), the Lumière brothers placed a camera next to a railway track and audiences thrilled as the train came closer and closer. In 1898, English filmmaker George Albert Smith mounted the front of a moving train to film a 'phantom ride'. While such films provided excitement for audiences, 'thrill' cinema soon gave way to narrative.

Just as filmmaking was once new, so too was film-viewing. Most audiences were not experienced filmgoers and those that were had been viewing events rather than stories. In 1903, Edwin S. Porter made the narrative film *The Life of an American Fireman* (1903). This film illustrates how filmmakers learnt to use editing to tell stories to the audience—it is an early example of how editing helps the audience understand what is happening in the story.

The film begins with split screen showing a fireman on one side and a mother putting her daughter to bed on the other. This is an early example of 'parallel editing'. Then there is a shot of a fire alarm being activated, followed by a shot of firemen leaping into action and jumping down a fire pole. Shots of the fire crews traveling to the fire provide the action and excitement.

Suddenly, there is a cut to the bedroom of the mother who was seen earlier putting the baby to bed. She screams out of the window for help and soon a fireman bursts in and rescues her and her daughter.

Interestingly, the same action was shown taking place from outside the building. Perhaps Porter thought that audiences would be confused by cross-cutting the interior and exterior shots together. A later version of the film does indeed feature a more modern cross-cutting style.

Learning activity

Go online and view *The Life of an American Fireman*. Download the film and re-cut it in a modern cross-cut parallel way. Alternatively, use the film stills in Figure 6.1.6 to re-storyboard the film in a modern fashion.

FIGURE 6.1.6 *The Life of an American Fireman* (1903) is an early experiment in continuity editing.

6.2 Conventions of narrative storytelling

Stories communicate meaning through technical and symbolic codes and conventions. This section will examine the storytelling conventions of fictional film.

OPENING, DEVELOPMENT AND CLOSURE

OPENING

The opening of a film introduces the audience to the world of time and space in which the narrative will take place. Opening sequences are often referred to as 'set-ups'. They provide a platform to launch the narrative. In the opening sequence, the audience will be oriented into both the physical setting and the historical setting of the film. The filmmaker will also introduce the characters and begins to develop them. The opening sequence will also begin the process of presenting narrative possibilities to the audience.

The Sixth Sense

In the opening sequence of M. Night Shyamalan's *The Sixth Sense* (1999), the audience is introduced to Dr Malcolm Crowe and his wife Anna (see Figure 6.2.1). Through the action, character and dialogue—as well as production elements including acting, visual composition, camera and editing—the audience is introduced to several narrative themes that are important to the understanding of the characters and the story.

Within minutes the audience knows that Malcolm and Anna are in love. The loss of this love is a theme that will be explored later. The sequence also explains Malcolm's profession as a child psychologist and how his success has come from sacrifice and putting his wife 'second'.

FIGURE 6.2.1 Malcolm (Bruce Willis) and Anna (Olivia Williams) in the opening scene of *The Sixth Sense* (1999)

The opening sequence also sets the context for the audience's understanding of Malcolm's relationship with the character Cole who the audience meets immediately after the opening sequence. The opening dialogue from *The Sixth Sense* demonstrates how the opening sequence of a film narrative can begin the story, establish setting, introduce characters and suggest themes to the audience that will be developed later.

```
 (ANNA ignores MALCOLM and clears
 her throat. She leans forward in
 her seat and reads the certificate
 out loud as MALCOLM tries to tickle
 her.)
                 ANNA
   In recognition for his
   outstanding achievement in the
   field of child psychology, his
   dedication to his work, and his
   continuing efforts to improve the
   quality of life for countless
   children and their families, the
   City of Philadelphia proudly
   bestows upon its son Dr. Malcolm
   Crowe ...  That's you ... the
   Mayor's Citation for Professional
   Excellence.

                 ANNA
   They called you their son.

                 MALCOLM
   Wow. We should hang it in the
   bathroom.

                 ANNA
   This is an important night
   for us. Finally someone is
   recognising the sacrifices
   you made. That you have put
   everything second, including
   me, for those families they're
   talking about. They're also
   saying that my husband has a
   gift. You have a gift that
   teaches children how to be strong
   in situations where most adults
   would piss on themselves. I
   believe what they wrote is real.

                 MALCOLM
   Thank you.
```

DEVELOPMENT

The characters, storylines and themes introduced in the opening sequence will then be developed throughout the middle of the narrative. This will involve changes in character relationships and often the introduction of new characters who will present new narrative possibilities to the audience. The development of a story is often influenced by the genre of the film. A typical murder mystery will introduce characters in the opening sequence, normally including the victim and the suspects. The murder will take place; the detective, whether amateur or professional, will investigate the crime, facing challenges and dangers; solve the crime and finally confront the killer. Any unresolved story points will be revealed to the audience. These might include the killer's motive, how they did it and the evidence that proves their guilt. Each genre will vary but all conventional narratives, will follow the opening – development – closure format.

CLOSURE

Just as the opening sequence provides a beginning for the narrative, the closing sequence of a film brings the narrative to its end. The closing sequence brings the narrative to the point of climax, both in a story and emotional sense. It is the sequence in a film where the audience reaches an understanding about unanswered questions relating to story and character. For example, the hero will confront the villain and order will be restored, two lovers torn apart will be reunited, the mystery surrounding an investigation will be explained, or a journey will come to its end. The closing sequence will often invite the audience to reflect upon the narrative and the characters they have just experienced.

In the closing sequence of *The Sixth Sense*, Shyamalan brings the audience to a new understanding of the events that they have witnessed throughout the film. Malcolm's realisation about the truth of his existence develops within the audience a different understanding of relationships between Malcolm and Anna and Malcolm and Cole.

> Many movies have memorable endings. In *Gone with the Wind* (1939) Clark Gable's character, Rhett Butler, uses the word 'damn' in one of the final scenes. Using this word back then created controversy and the censors wanted it removed– but the filmmakers wanted it to stay and it did.

MULTIPLE STORYLINES

Multiple storylines are common in narrative film. While most narratives will follow one storyline closely, it is common for backstories or complimentary stories to run concurrently. *Little Miss Sunshine* presents the story of a family driving from New Mexico to California to get the youngest member of the family, Olive, to a beauty pageant. While the family is travelling, other family members' stories are also presented: Richard trying to get his book published; Cheryl trying to keep her family happy; Frank's recovery from a suicide attempt; the story of Dwayne's vow of silence; and Grandpa's unique way of coping with growing old. The characters and their stories all interrelate.

Some narratives present multiple storylines involving characters that do not know one another, but may be linked through their stories. *Babel* (2006) (see Figure 6.2.2) presents the stories of several people living in different countries whose lives are affected by one another's decisions and actions. These multiple storylines explore the theme of cause and effect.

FIGURE 6.2.2 Movie poster for *Babel* (2006)

NARRATIVE POSSIBILITIES

Throughout a narrative story, possibilities are presented to the audience. A boy meeting a girl could present several narrative possibilities including the possibility of romance, rejection or an unhealthy obsession to name a few. All of these possibilities take the character and the film in different directions.

> Genres like action, comedy, science fiction and film noir will almost invariably follow a main story based on attaining a goal like solving a crime or defeating a villain, while running parallel to the main action will be a love story involving the hero or heroine.

Often the narrative possibilities will be dependent on the genre. In a romantic comedy, the likely possibilities would be love or rejection. The unhealthy obsession might be saved for a psychological thriller in which one of the characters stalks the other. Similarly, the horror genre will have recognisable narrative possibilities.

While genre films present recognisable narrative possibilities, non-genre films or hybrid genre films also rely on narrative possibilities to engage the audience. In *Run Lola Run* (1998), director Tom Tykwer quickly introduces the characters Lola and Manni and the narrative possibility that Manni will be killed if Lola cannot get him the 100 000 deutschmarks he needs to give his boss. As Lola thinks of the people that she can go to for help, more narrative possibilities present themselves. Will she go to her father or her mother? If she doesn't get to him in time will Manni rob the Bolle store? Narrative possibilities engage the audience through natural human curiosity. As the possibilities are presented, the audience becomes curious about what characters will do and how the story will unfold.

Sometimes the filmmaker will use narrative possibilities to completely mislead the audience so that they can be shocked or surprised later in the film. Master director Alfred Hitchcock skillfully presents several narrative possibilities in *Psycho* (1960), which are never realised. For example:

- Sam and Marion might break up.
- Sam and Marion might get married.
- Marion might be arrested for stealing the $40 000.
- Marion might become romantically involved with Norman.
- Marion might return to Phoenix.

By suggesting these narrative possibilities in the minds of his audience, Hitchcock is able to surprise and shock audiences by taking the story in directions that they have not even considered.

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Character development is the revelation of a character's personality, beliefs, strengths, weaknesses and emotions to the audience. Audiences are normally introduced to the protagonist at the start of a narrative. From this point on, audiences learn more about who they really are, sometimes being fooled by the filmmaker along the way.

Character development can be done through various narrative devices. The simplest is the traditional 'Once upon a time there was a girl called …' fairytale format where the audience is immediately introduced to the main character and then told her story. In this format, the character's development is revealed to the audience through the plot. *The Lion King* (1994) is an example of this structure. Audiences see Simba's story from his birth through to his ascension to his father's throne. Along the way, audiences see his character change and develop from a weak young lion exiled from the pride by his evil uncle to the strong, brave adult shown in Figure 6.2.3.

FIGURE 6.2.3 The character of Simba in *The Lion King* (1994)

Another technique is to look back on a character's life or part of it. Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* (1941) opens with the death of the title character Charles Foster Kane, followed by a newsreel presentation of his life. The newsreel gives the audience a quick introduction to the achievements of Charles Foster Kane, millionaire newspaper owner. The journalist making the newsreel tells the audience that knowing what he did is not enough—they need to know who he was. Welles then tells Kane's story through the remembrances of characters that knew him. Each of these small stories within the broader narrative reveals more about the character of Charles Foster Kane. Welles reveals Kane's character by showing the effect that he has had on the other characters. For example, Kane's second wife Susan Alexander becomes a drunken singer in a cheap nightclub after his blind ambition to turn her into an opera singer destroys her self-esteem.

Learning activities

1 Consider the fictional film narrative you have studied this year and list the decisions and actions that reveal the character of the main protagonist.

2 Choose two characters from the text and explain what changes occur and their character development.

3 The following table outlines some simple characters and a development in their character.
   • Come up with cause or motivation for their character development.
   • Make a list of things they could say and actions they could take, which would illustrate the character development to the audience.

CHARACTER	DEVELOPMENT	CAUSE / MOTIVATION	DIALOGUE	ACTION
A mother who idolises her son	Becomes a mother who disowns her son		e.g. 'From this moment on, I have no son.'	e.g. As she listens to a phone message left by her son, she cuts his image away from the family portrait.
A happy man with a successful business	Becomes depressed and considers suicide			
A frail, bullied schoolgirl	Becomes strong-willed and confident			
A young internet chatterer	Turns into an obsessive online stalker			
A committed white supremacist	Becomes disenchanted with white supremacist theory			
A well-respected and honest judge	Decides to convict a man he knows is innocent			
A popular novelist	Becomes a novelist with writer's block			

CAUSE AND EFFECT

Cause and effect is a narrative function that helps audiences understand character motivations and decisions and drives the story. After characters and narrative possibilities are presented to the audience, the narrative relies on characters and their circumstances changing to engage the audience. Film narratives rely on characters making decisions that affect themselves and other characters in the narrative. In Jocelyn Moorhouse's *The Dressmaker* (2015), Tilly Dunnage must return to the outback town of Dungatar to take care of her ailing mother. This leads her to meet the handsome Teddy, with whom she falls in love.

The narrative function of cause and effect may be presented in a non-conventional non-linear manner. This is demonstrated in *Before the Devil Knows You're Dead* (2007) (see Figure 6.2.4) where the narrative is presented in a non-sequential form. Two brothers are motivated by money to commit a 'victimless crime'. Andy, who needs to repay the money he has embezzled from his company, convinces his brother Hank, who needs money for child support, to commit a robbery. This decision triggers an unforeseen chain of events that results in tragedy. The non-sequential nature of the film stops the audience guessing what will happen next and heightens the drama as the audience pieces the causes and effects together.

The cause and effect chain is a foundation of both storytelling and creating drama in a narrative. Cause becomes effect and in turn becomes cause. Consider the cause and effect chain in *Run Lola Run*.

Cause: Manni loses Ronnie's 100 000 deutschmarks.

Effect: He decides to rob the Bolle store to get the money.

Cause: Manni decides to Rob the Bolle store.

Effect: Lola runs to her father to ask for help.

Cause: Lola asks her father for the money.

Effect: Papa refuses to help Lola.

Cause: Papa refuses to help.

Effect: Lola helps Manni rob the store.

Cause: Lola and Manni rob the store.

Effect: Lola is killed in the getaway.

Run Lola Run director Tom Tykwer manipulates the concept of cause and effect by presenting the narrative three times with each having a different cause and effect chain sparked by a small change in character action at the beginning of each of Lola's runs.

FIGURE 6.2.4 Character motivation and cause and effect are fundamental elements of the film narrative in *Before the Devil Knows You're Dead* (2007).

SETTING

The setting of a fictional film narrative refers to the location, the historical or time period in which the story takes place and the duration or timeframe of the story.

LOCATION

Location refers to the physical geography of the story.

- On what planet does the action take place?

- In what country?

- In what city?

- On which street?

- In which building and in which room?

Lars and the Real Girl (2007) is a quirky comedy about a lonely, delusional young man who falls in love with a life-size doll. Director Craig Gillespie uses a snow-covered country location in Wisconsin to emphasise the loneliness and isolation of Lars Lindstrom. Setting the story in a small town also means that there is no escaping the embarrassment of the situation for Lars' brother, Gus. The setting therefore helps the audience to see Gus's point of view, as shown in Figure 6.2.5. The small town setting also allows the theme of the community caring for one another to take shape as the townsfolk support Lars and accept Bianca as a member of their community.

Location and film genre

The setting of a narrative helps to tell the story because audiences already have an understanding of settings and their context within film genres.

- Horror: Wes Craven's horror film *Scream* (1996) opens in an isolated house on a dark and windy night. A young blonde girl named Casey cooks popcorn as she waits alone for her boyfriend to arrive. Think about it. It is dark, she is isolated, she is young, pretty and alone and it is a horror film. The audience expects her to get killed or at the very least attacked.

FIGURE 6.2.5 *Lars and the Real Girl* (2007)

- Science fiction: Audiences put aside logic and their knowledge of the real world to accept the science fiction reality of such films as *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), *Planet of the Apes* (1968) or *Star Wars* (1977).

- Fantasy: Films such as *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (2002) or *Twilight* (2008) will define the reality in which its characters live. The audience accepts the fact that Harry Potter can ride a broomstick, just as they believe that Bella can fall in love with the vampire Edward whom she meets at school.

HISTORICAL AND TIME PERIOD

The historical or time period of the setting addresses such story variables as whether it takes place in contemporary times, historical times or in the future. Steven Spielberg's *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (1989) is set in the late 1930s. This allows the hero, Indiana Jones, to be opposed by the most evil regime in history, Adolf Hitler's Nazis. Having the Nazis as an enemy makes Indiana Jones even more of a hero because just as the Nazis represent evil, by opposing them Indiana will represent good.

Location and historical period

The location setting can also help to develop character and point of view as it does in *The Third Man* (1949). Holly Martins, an American writer of Western novels, arrives in post–Second World War Vienna. Holly is a man with a strong sense of right and wrong. After hearing police accusations against his friend Harry Lime, he vows to clear his name. But Holly is now in Vienna where the ideals of right and wrong have been smashed to the ground, just as the buildings have been bombed into rubble. Vienna is a setting where the simplistic rules of right and wrong do not apply. Against this setting Holly is exposed as a naïve innocent who must question his beliefs of right and wrong, good and evil. It is largely the setting that gives this character the opportunity to develop in front of the audience. The climactic scene of the film was set and filmed in the sewers underneath Vienna, as seen in Figure 6.2.6. It is a stunning setting and a fitting place to set the culmination of a story about the underground world of the black market.

FIGURE 6.2.6 The manhunt through the sewers in *The Third Man* (1949)

DURATION OF TIME

The duration of time is the amount of time a story occurs within the lives of the characters. For example, the narrative in *Citizen Kane* covers the timeframe from Charles Foster Kane's childhood through to the days after his death. On the other hand, the narrative in *Run Lola Run* takes place in a timeframe spanning 20 minutes of Lola and Manni's lives.

In genres such as horror, westerns, film noir, comedy, romantic comedy, science fiction and fantasy, the audience understands the codes and conventions that apply to the different genres as they relate to duration of time.

Learning activity

Choose a fictional narrative text you have studied and answer the following questions about setting:

- How does the setting relate to the narrative?
- What is the historical period of the narrative?
- How is the historical period of the film relevant?
- What locations are used in the narrative?
- How do the locations help to develop the story?
- What is the duration of the story in the main protagonist's lifetime?

STRUCTURING OF TIME

Film narratives operate within codes and conventions and audiences view films with an understanding of these conventions. The structuring of time within a narrative is an example of this. Film uses conventions to help audiences overcome the limitations of real time. For example, when a character opens the front door of their house and the director then fades into a shot of them driving a car, we immediately understand that the character has walked to their car, opened the door, got in, turned the engine on, pulled out into the street and is now driving the car to another destination. The audience does not have to see all of this happen in order to believe it.

> Audiences accept the convention that films compress time so that the events in a character's lifetime can occur for us within the two hours we have set aside to watch the film.

While audiences are familiar with the conventional linear presentation of time where a story unfolds from beginning to end, filmmakers can challenge these conventions through restructuring the order of time. Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* (1994) shows the story unfold in non-linear time, mixing up each character's reality with impossibility. Michael Gondry uses a non-conventional structuring of time in *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004) (see Figure 6.2.7) by mixing present time with memories and flashbacks and dreams throughout the narrative. The unconventional time structure of the film develops the theme of confusion and loss that is part of the story of two lovers who have their memories of one another erased.

FIGURE 6.2.7 *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004)

Time can also be restructured when subjective time replaces real time as in *Battleship Potemkin* (1925). Director Sergei Eisenstein stretches the famous scene in which the army massacres the revolutionaries on the Odessa Steps beyond the 'real time' that it would have taken for the soldiers to march down the stairs.

Occasionally a film narrative will present the story in real time where screen time and story time are the same as in *My Dinner with Andre* (1981) or *Nick of Time* (1995). This has also been tried in television with 24 hours being presented in real time, minus commercials. Audiences are so used to time being restructured in film that real time in film is very rare and somewhat risky for the filmmaker.

Time can also be manipulated in a film narrative through such devices as timelapse photography, slow motion, fast motion, flashback and flash-forward.

POINT OF VIEW

In presenting the narrative, the filmmaker decides whose point of view the story will be told from. In a conventionally plotted narrative, the point of view will be that of one or two protagonists.

Point of view does not need to be limited to one character. In *Crash* (2004) or *Little Miss Sunshine* point of view moves from one character to another as the film tells the stories of a collection of interrelated characters. The same narrative can also be presented from several points of view as in *Go* (1999), where the same story unfolds three times, each time through the point of view of a different character. In *Run Lola Run*, Lola is the main protagonist. While most of the narrative is presented from her point of view the audience is also shown the point of view of her boyfriend Manni, her father and several other characters.

Sometimes genre will define point of view. For example, a romance is almost necessarily presented from the point of view of the two people falling in love. If the plot includes another character whose love is perhaps unrequited, their point of view may be presented as well. Whereas, a western such as *High Noon* (1952), a crime drama such as *The Godfather* (1972) and an action adventure like *The Dark Knight* (2008) are almost always seen from the point of view of the main protagonist.

Learning activities

1   How was time structured in the fictional film narrative that you studied?
- Was it structured conventionally or non-conventionally? Explain your answer.
- If the film used flashbacks, flash-forwards or dream sequences, explain how these engaged the audience with the narrative.

2   Watch the scene in *Citizen Kane* (1941) in which Kane and his first wife, Emily, meet at breakfast.
- How does this scene move time forward?
- What does the scene communicate to the audience about Kane and Emily's marriage?
- This scene takes up two minutes and twenty seconds of screen time. How much time in the duration of Kane's life does the scene represent?

3   Choose a scene from the fictional media narrative you are studying that manipulates time.
- What is the effect on time with regard to the duration of the character's lives?
- What filmmaking techniques has the director used to achieve this restructuring of time?

4   Choose one of the fictional media texts you have studied this year.
- Whose point of view is the narrative presented from? How do you know?
- Is the narrative presented exclusively from the main protagonist's point of view or are the points of view of other characters presented? If so which character/s? Give examples from the text.

5   Discuss the genre of the film narrative you are studying. Has the narrative point of view been determined by the genre of the film?

American Beauty

American Beauty (1999) was directed by Sam Mendes and tells the story of the Burnham family, comprising Lester (Kevin Spacey), his wife Carolyn (Annette Benning) and their daughter Jane (Thora Birch). The film tells the story of an unhappy family: the husband is having a mid-life crisis, his materialistic wife is having an affair and their daughter is insecure.

FIGURE 6.2.8 Lester, Carolyn and Jane in a scene from *American Beauty* (1999)

NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

American Beauty opens with the main character, Lester Burnham, introducing himself to the audience in a voice-over and telling them that he is already dead. The director, Sam Mendes, then develops Lester's character by showing the audience the story of the last year of his life.

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

At first, Lester is presented as a conservatively dressed, downtrodden, unhappy man who has no meaningful interaction with either his wife or his daughter, but this is not the real Lester Burnham. As the narrative unfolds, the audience comes to understand more about who Lester Burnham really is through the decisions he makes and the actions he takes.

Lester's wife Carolyn is first introduced to the audience by Lester. His narration gives us an insight, not only into her, but to him and to the nature of their relationship. He introduces the audience to a woman who is so concerned with her appearance that her gardening clogs match the handle of her pruning shears. When Carolyn talks to their neighbour Jim, Lester's voice-over dialogue gives the audience more understanding about the characters when he says, 'She wasn't always like this. She used to be happy. We used to be happy'.

FIGURE 6.2.9 The unhappy couple, Lester and Carolyn, in *American Beauty* (1999)

It is not just what characters say that develops them but also what they do. When confronted with being fired as part of a corporate restructuring, Lester blackmails his employer. With the money Lester buys a 1970 Pontiac Firebird: 'The car I always wanted and now I have it. I rule'. Lester is beginning to take charge of his life through his actions. The decisions he makes and the actions that follow them develop within the audience a better understanding of his character.

CAUSE AND EFFECT

Carolyn is unhappy in her relationship with Lester so she begins an affair with her real estate rival.

SETTING

The film is set it middle-class America, in suburbia. The Burnham house is 'perfect', clean and obsessively neat.

POINT OF VIEW

The main narrative in *American Beauty* is presented from Lester Burnham's point of view and it is his story the audience is seeing. The narrative is structured in a way that makes the audience empathise with Lester and understands his feelings. The film, however, does not exclusively present Lester's point of view. At different stages, director Sam Mendes shows the audience the point of view of Lester's wife Carolyn and daughter Jane, her boyfriend Ricky, his parents, and Angela, the object of Lester's desire.

6.3 Technical codes

A film is made up of various technical codes that are often referred to as production elements. When analysing a film, you need to be able to deconstruct it to see how the director has manipulated technical and symbolic codes to create story, meaning, theme and emotion.

LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION

Film directors oversee and shape the creative processes that all come together to produce the onscreen narrative. The cinematographer or director of photography is responsible for the fundamental process of getting an image onto film, which relies on manipulating the light entering the camera through the lens. Cinematographers use light to help tell the audience the narrative through light, space, tone and colour. *Citizen Kane* director Orson Welles acknowledged the creative contribution of cinematographer Gregg Toland by sharing his screen credit with him.

> I think visually, I think of how, if you turned off the soundtrack, anybody would stick around and [could] figure out what was going on.
>
> Conrad Hall (cinematographer on *Cool Hand Luke*, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, *In Cold Blood* and *American Beauty*), *Visions of Light*, 1992

PRODUCTION ELEMENTS

The production elements of film include lighting, camera, sound, editing, *mise en scène* and acting.

LIGHTING

Lighting is perhaps the production element most taken for granted by the audience. At the most basic level, lighting allows objects and characters to be seen by the audience. However lighting can also be one of the most creative elements of filmmaking. Lighting can create mystery or fear through the use of shadows. Using soft lighting can help develop a romantic mood between characters. Harsh, hard light can express contrasts between characters. Lighting establishes character development by making characters look warm and friendly or cold and harsh. Lighting is a major factor in the *mise en scène* of a film.

A basic problem for the filmmaker is that the audience lives in a three-dimensional world but film is projected in only two dimensions. To convince the audience that they are watching real people in a believable world, the filmmaker must create spatial depth through lighting. To achieve this three-dimensional feeling, cinematographers light the background of the shot to create a broad depth of field.

Hard and soft light

Lighting can be described as hard or soft.

Hard light:

- hits the actors directly from the source
- consists of bright whites and dark blacks and creates a harsh and sometimes cold feeling
- dominates the world of film noir.

Soft light:

- is diffused through a filter or bounced or reflected onto the actors
- flows all over the objects in the frame, creating a soft warm feeling.

Figure 6.3.1 illustrates soft light, while Figure 6.3.2 illustrates hard light. Both shots show a man and woman who represent the major love interests. The differing lighting of the two scenes helps to develop the relationships of the characters. In Figure 6.3.1, soft light washes over Ingrid Bergman and Humphrey Bogart, almost drawing them together. Notice the grey tones, particularly on their faces. The feeling created is very much of a couple falling in love. Compare this feeling to that created by the hard light on Barbara Stanwyck and Fred MacMurray in the film noir classic *Double Indemnity* (1944) (see Figure 6.3.2). Notice how the lighting highlights the extremes of white and black, just as film noir explores the extremes of good and evil. Here the hard light creates a feeling of passion laced with danger.

Developing story and character

Light can also be used to develop story and character within in a film. In *The Third Man*, Harry Lime is a character from the post–Second World War Vienna underworld, a man who makes his living selling defective penicillin on the black market. In the first half of the film, Holly Martins investigates Harry's suspicious accidental death, while Harry's girlfriend Anna mourns her lost love. When Harry finally appears to Holly, it is as if he has seen a ghost. The

FIGURE 6.3.1 Soft light shines on Rick (Humphrey Bogart) and Elsa (Ingrid Bergman) in *Casablanca* (1942)

FIGURE 6.3.2 Hard light shines on Phyllis (Barbara Stanwyck) and Walter (Fred MacMurray) in *Double Indemnity* (1944)

lighting contributes greatly to this feeling. The first shot of Harry is lit in a way that shrouds his body in darkness while illuminating only his face (see Figure 6.3.3). In the next scene, after reporting his sighting of Harry to the police, Holly is accused of seeing a ghost. This first shot of Harry emerging from his self-imposed darkness develops his character by making him seem able to appear and disappear at will. Considering what the audience knows about Harry's crimes, it also reveals a certain smugness about him: it does not reveal a criminal fearful of being caught, but a man confident that he will not be.

Lighting can also help to communicate the point of view of a character. In Sam Mendes' *American Beauty*, the lighting conveys Lester Burnham's point of view to the audience in the cheerleading scene. As Lester sits in the stand watching his daughter perform a cheerleading routine, he catches sight of her friend Angela. Lester's attraction to Angela is accentuated by the lighting. The gym goes dark except for a spotlight on Angela. As the music changes and she dances seductively for Lester, his face is lit with a single spotlight. As the sequence continues, all of the other cheerleaders disappear as do all of the audience members except for Lester who sits alone in the darkened stand illuminated by the spotlight. As the routine finishes, the normal lighting of the gym is restored along with the cheerleaders and the audience. The lighting alone leaves the audience in no doubt that Lester is attracted to Angela and presents the narrative possibility that he may become involved with her.
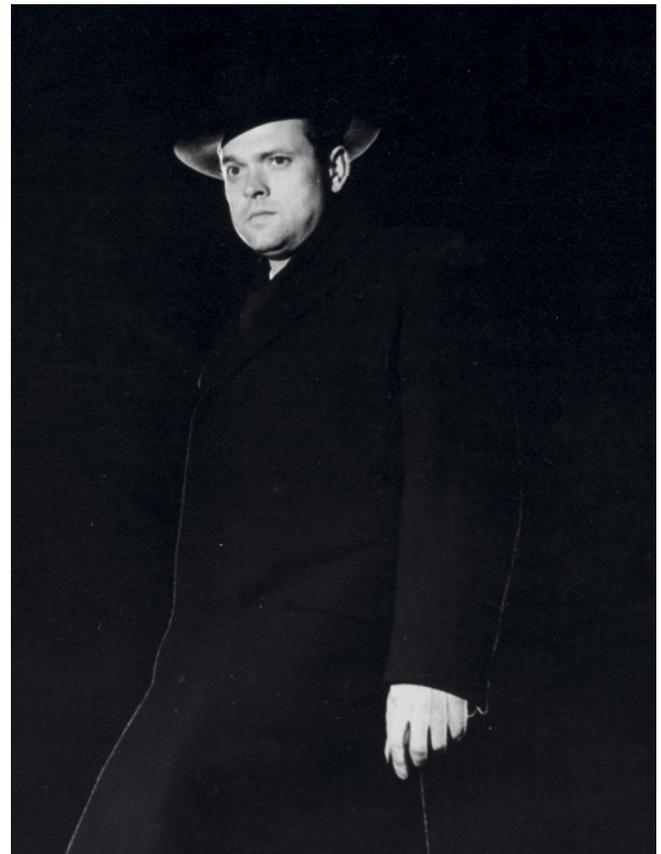
FIGURE 6.3.3 The lighting in this shot from Carol Reed's *The Third Man* (1949) adds to the feeling that Holly is seeing his friend Harry Lime come back from the dead

CAMERA

Camera techniques develop the plot, narrative possibilities and the characters without the audience even knowing.

Film format

Choosing the film format is a fundamental decision that affects the look and the mood of a film. In the early days of filmmaking, the format was limited to black and white film running at 24 frames per second. Now filmmakers are faced with many film format options including black and white film, colour film, 16 mm, 35 mm, 50 mm, 70 mm, digital video, video and animation.

Often the film format will reflect the genre of the film. The film noir genre, for example, is traditionally shot in black and white, while musicals are almost exclusively shot in colour. The film format can sometimes change to help set the timeframe of the film or tell part of the story. For instance, in *Pleasantville* (1998), black and white is used to set the timeframe of a 1950s television show as well as illustrating the narrow mindedness of the Pleasantville lifestyle. In the same film, colour is used to represent freedom, growth and opportunity.

Some filmmakers use various formats within the same film. Tom Tykwer in *Run Lola Run* uses a combination of formats to present different elements of the narrative. The action with Lola and Manni is shot in colour film, while their memory sequences are shot in black and white (see Figures 6.3.4 and 6.3.5). Tykwer also uses animation to show Lola

at the start of her three 'runs' as well as shooting the scenes that do not feature Lola or Manni in video. The various formats help to create an eclectic feeling in the film and a world in which Lola and Manni exist as opposed to the world that goes on all around them.

Camera lenses

Camera lenses range from wide-angle to telephoto. The skilled cinematographer and director will choose the lens that best suits the telling of the story and the feeling that they are trying to create within their audience.

In *Rear Window* (1954), Alfred Hitchcock and the director of photography, Robert Burks, used different lenses to seamlessly draw the audience into Jefferies' point of view (POV). Hitchcock filmed all of Jefferies' POV shots using a 50 mm lens and again using a 75 mm lens. A standard POV shot will be preceded by a shot of a character looking at something. This shot will then be followed by the POV shot revealing to the audience what the character is looking at. Shooting the POV shots with the two different lenses

FIGURES 6.3.4 AND 6.3.5 In *Run Lola Run* (1998), Tom Tykwer uses various film formats to explore the possibilities of life

allowed Hitchcock to take the audience a step further. The plot has Jefferies watching his neighbours and becoming suspicious when one of them, Mrs Thorwald, goes missing. As Jefferies becomes interested in what is happening in the Thorwald apartment, the audience is shown the conventional pre-POV shot showing him looking at something across the courtyard. Hitchcock then cuts to a 50 mm POV shot of the Thorwald apartment. Whatever is happening makes Jefferies more curious. The camera then cuts back to a shot of Jefferies still looking in the same direction, but now he leans forward. This time Hitchcock cuts to a 75 mm POV shot of the Thorwald apartment, taking Jefferies and the audience closer to the action. The result of cutting between the 50 mm and 75 mm lenses is that the audience experiences what Jefferies is experiencing.

Camera movement

The most basic movements of a camera are panning (side-to-side movement), zooming (closing in on or pulling away from an object), tilting (looking up or down), tracking (where the camera travels alongside the object being filmed) and handheld. Movement can be used to create emotion within the audience or to draw the their attention to a particular object or character.

In the opening shot of *Rear Window*, Alfred Hitchcock uses camera movement to establish the setting and introduce the audience to his protagonist, photojournalist L.B. Jefferies. At the same time, he introduces the characters that Jefferies will watch from his apartment throughout the film:

1 The opening shot of *Rear Window* is exactly that. The audience, through the camera, looks out of a rear apartment window into a courtyard. As the credits end, the camera zooms forward taking the audience out of the apartment and into the courtyard.

2 Hitchcock then cuts to a tilted shot looking down into the courtyard. Slowly the camera pans right and tilts up to reveal an apartment building, several stories high. The shot continues as the camera now pans left across the apartments, before finally pulling back into Jefferies' apartment, ending with a close-up of Jefferies as he sleeps in a lather of perspiration.

3 Then there is a cut to a thermometer reading '94° Fahrenheit'. After pausing on the thermometer for a moment the camera is on the move again, panning left to reveal 'The Songwriter' shaving in his apartment. From here the camera pans right to the 'Fire Escape Couple' sleeping outside to avoid the heat. The camera

then moves down to 'Miss Torso's' apartment where it stops long enough to watch her put on her bra and practise a few dance moves (see Figure 6.3.6). The camera slowly pans left and back into Jefferies' apartment where it pans down his body revealing a plaster cast on his left leg with the words, 'Here lie the broken bones of L.B. Jefferies'. The camera pulls out to establish that he is confined to a wheelchair, pans left to a nearby table and settles on a shattered camera. From the camera there is a pan up to a framed photograph on the wall of a racing car accident featuring a tyre travelling straight towards the photographer. Another pan follows across several news photographs, a number of cameras and a framed negative of a woman, finishing on a pile of *Life* magazines featuring the woman on the cover and then a fade to black. The whole sequence takes two minutes and twenty seconds.

FIGURE 6.3.6 Miss Torso (Georgina Darcy) in *Rear Window* (1954)

Rear Window is a film in which the main protagonist spends much of his time spying on his neighbours. The audience spies on Jefferies' neighbours even before he does. Hitchcock even makes sure that the camera and audience pauses to watch the half-dressed Miss Torso for 20 seconds. And while turning his audience into voyeurs, Hitchcock establishes the setting and begins his character development. Without a word of dialogue the audience has learned the name of the main character, his occupation as a photojournalist, his surroundings and the fact that he is confined to a wheelchair. Some in the audience will have also worked out that Jefferies broke his leg while taking the photograph of the racing car accident. This is confirmed in the next scene when Jefferies discusses the accident with his editor.

Camera angle

While the conventional level mid-height camera angle may be the staple in mainstream cinema, varying the angle of a shot can create the mood of a scene, reveal important information, establish relationships between characters and develop both characters and storyline. For example, a character shot from a high camera angle can seem vulnerable or intimidated, while a character shot from a low angle can seem dominant and intimidating.

Tilted camera angles are sometimes used by directors to make the audience feel uncomfortable, often mirroring the feelings of characters within the narrative. Consider Carol Reed's use of tilted camera angles in *The Third Man*, shown in Figure 6.3.7. Holly Martins, the main protagonist, has had the simple truths of his life turned upside down and inside out. Within hours of arriving in Vienna, he is at the funeral of his old friend Harry Lime, the man who has paid for his trip and offered him a job. As if this were not enough, he is told that Harry was an underworld figure selling black market penicillin. Holly is a long way from home and very confused. Reed's tilted camera angles enhance his confusion. Audiences are used to level frames and straight, square camera angles. The tilted camera angles make the audience uncomfortable by creating a visually challenging environment in which they, like Holly, feel uncomfortable and confused.

FIGURE 6.3.7 Carol Reed used tilted camera angles extensively in *The Third Man* (1949).

Handheld

Handheld camera movement is often used to create tension or simulate a stressful situation. The slight shaking of the camera can give the audience a feeling of reality, similar to that experienced when watching a news story or a documentary. Kathryn Bigelow's film *The Hurt Locker* (2008) tells the story of a bomb disposal unit in Baghdad. Bigelow and cinematographer Barry Ackroyd used four handheld cameras covering 360 degrees around the bomb defusing scenes, including first-person or point-of-view shots. The handheld camera creates a realistic feeling and tension in the audience (see Figure 6.3.8).

FIGURE 6.3.8 *The Hurt Locker* (2008)

Handheld cameras can also be used to create a sense of confusion within the audience. Director Michael Gondry insisted that cinematographer Ellen Kuras shoot *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* entirely handheld. The film tells the story of Joel Barish, a man who decides to have the memory of his former girlfriend removed from his brain. Much of the non-linear, unconventional narrative takes place within Joel's memory and dreams. The handheld camera helps to create a feeling of confusion and surrealism often experienced in dreams.

Zooming

Zooming is often used to draw the audience's attention to a particular object or character within a scene. The focal length of the camera determines how far away an object or character is. Changing the focal length by zooming brings the object closer. Because people cannot instantaneously change the focal length of their eyes, zooms tend to

be fairly obvious to the audience. This can be used to advantage to draw the audience's attention to an object or character. In *Run Lola Run*, Tom Tykwer uses a very fast zoom onto the red phone in Lola's room. He follows this zoom with another very fast one onto the phone booth from which her boyfriend Manni is calling her. The obvious speed of these 'crash zooms' focuses the audience's attention onto both characters. A director can hide a zoom by slowly combining it with another movement such as a pan. Slow zooms can also be used to create tension. In the dinner scene in *American Beauty*, Sam Mendes uses a slow zoom into the dining room to express the feeling of tension and the emotional distance between the family members.

Camera shot

The most basic shot types include close-up, extreme close-up, mid-shot, long shot, extreme long shot and point of view. Each type of shot is used in a context relevant to the situation in a film. For example, a close-up of a character facing an object, followed by a point of view shot of the object indicates that the audience is seeing what the character is seeing. A filmmaker wanting to show a character looking isolated or lonely may place the character in an extreme long shot to achieve this feeling.

A mid-shot is normally used to show two characters talking to one another, while a close-up of one of the characters may draw the audience to the importance of this character's dialogue. Often characters will share a close-

up if the director is trying to establish a close relationship between the two. This is illustrated in this shared close-up of lovers Joel and Clementine in Michael Gondry's *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (see Figure 6.3.9).

SOUND

FIGURE 6.3.9 This shared close-up from *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004) helps the audience understand the close relationship shared by Joel and Clementine

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Learning activities

1. Watch the scene from *The Third Man* in which Holly and Anna talk to the porter about Harry's accident.
   - Describe how the tilted camera angle makes you feel.
   - Compare your feelings with what Holly Martins might be feeling.
   - Why do you think Carol Reed used these angles?

2. Watch the parlour scene from *Psycho* and storyboard the changes in camera angle throughout the scene. Describe the effect that the changes have on the audience.

3. Examine and describe the camera angles in the film narrative you are studying. Are they conventional or unconventional?

4. Pick out a key scene from the film and discuss why the director may have chosen the angles that he did. Do you think they help to tell the story?

5. Choose a scene from the fictional media narrative you are studying where the director uses camera movement. How does the camera movement help to develop the narrative?

6. Watch the sequence in *Rear Window* discussed in the text and storyboard the changes in the shots.

7. Choose a scene from the fictional media narrative you are studying and discuss how the director's choice of shot types has influenced the development of the narrative and character development.

Sound can communicate story information, character development, point of view, mood and emotion. It can be divided into two categories: diegetic and non-diegetic. Diegetic sound occurs within the world of the narrative. Music coming from a radio that a character turns on, something a character says to another, or the sound of glass breaking as a character smashes a mirror are all examples of diegetic sound. Non-diegetic sound comes from outside the world of the story. Non-diegetic sounds might include orchestral music playing in the background of a scene or the sound of a heartbeat as we watch a character running.

Dialogue

Sound includes dialogue, voice-over, music, and sound effects (also known as foley). Dialogue is the term describing what the characters say. In a film, the dialogue can be heard when the performer is in the shot, or it can come from voice-over, narration or offscreen. Voice-over refers to the sound of speech placed over the sound of the scene. It can be used as a narration for the story or to let the audience hear the thoughts of the characters onscreen.

Conventional narrator

A traditional convention has been to have one narrator, often one of the characters, talk to the audience while they watch the action unfold. At the beginning of Billy Wilder's *Sunset Boulevard* (1950), as the audience watches police cars race through the Los Angeles dawn, the narrator tells the audience:

> Yes, this is Sunset Boulevard, Los Angeles, California. It's about five o'clock in the morning. That's the Homicide Squad, complete with detectives and newspapermen. A murder has been reported from one of those great big houses in the ten thousand block. You'll read about it in the late editions, I'm sure. You'll get it over your radio and see it on television because an old-time star is involved, one of the biggest. But before you hear it all distorted and blown out of proportion, before those Hollywood columnists get their hands on it, maybe you'd like to hear the facts, the whole truth. If so, you've come to the right party.

As the camera pans from the police cars that have pulled into the driveway of the great big house to a body in a swimming pool, the narrator continues:

> You see, the body of a young man was found floating in the pool of her mansion with two shots in his back and one in his stomach. Nobody important, really. Just a movie writer with a couple of 'B' pictures to his credit. The poor dope! He always wanted a pool. Well, in the end, he got himself a pool, only the price turned out to be a little high.

Through the narration, Billy Wilder engages the audience by raising questions of narrative possibility. Who is the narrator? Who is the body in the pool? Who put the two shots in his back and one in his stomach?

Unconventional narrator

A more unconventional approach to narration is in Wes Anderson's *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014), where voice-over is provided by two narrations and three different voices. The first is the voice of 'Author', played by Tom Wilkinson who, in 1985—the audience is informed in a title—looks straight into the camera to explain how people bring stories to writers. As Author then begins to tell us about the incidents of this particular story, Anderson cuts to the setting of a spa town in the mountains of the fictional town 'Zubrowka' and then to The Grand Budapest Hotel itself, glowing pink with snow softly falling. As the audience sees the hotel for the first time Author tells us: 'I had taken up rooms in The Grand Budapest, a picturesque, elaborate and once widely celebrated establishment. I expect some of you will know it.'

Anderson then cuts to a new shot of The Grand Budapest Hotel in a much more austere grey, accompanied by the title '1968'. At this point, Author's voice changes from that of Tom Wilkinson to that of Jude Law, playing Author some 27 years earlier. The narration continues, while the audience watches Author interact briefly with the other guests and hotel staff until he meets Mr Mustafa, the owner of the hotel, played by F. Murray Abraham. At dinner, as Mr Mustafa begins to tell his story, Anderson cuts to 1932 and the audience is introduced to M. Gustave hiring the young lobby boy Zero Mustafa. Mr Mustafa's voice now becomes the narrator: 'And so my life began. Junior Lobby Boy in training, Grand Budapest Hotel, under the strict command of Monsieur Gustave H ...'

The convention is broken yet again, later in the film, when Author resumes his narration to comment upon how distressed Mr Mustafa had become when talking about Agatha. After Author narrates: '... He was crying', the live dialogue of Mr Mustafa tells the audience: 'You see I never speak of Agatha because even at the thought of her name I am unable to control my emotions.'

Here Anderson uses both the narration and dialogue to develop the characters of Zero and Agatha and their relationship. A narrative question is also raised. What happens to Agatha?

Music and sound effects

Sound effects help create the 'realism' of film and, together with images, convince the audience that they are watching real characters and real action. Music helps to create the mood of a scene, and a romantic scene will be accompanied by romantic music. Film music or the score is heard only by the audience and accompanies and supports the action on screen. In some cases, the music comes from the action and serves the purpose of developing character.

In *American Beauty*, Lester's wife Carolyn plays tunes from various musicals while the family eats. This develops her character by suggesting that, like in a musical, her perception of reality is a fantasy. For Lester, the music represents the blandness that dominates his life. Lester's musical choices also reflect his attitude to getting out of the sedation that he feels. As Lester pumps iron in his garage, he listens to Bob Dylan singing 'All Along the Watchtower'. As Carolyn opens the garage door, Dylan sings 'There must be some kind of way out of here'. The words of the song represent Lester's search for a way out of his own circumstances.

Later, as Carolyn drives home from the shooting range to confront Lester, she sings along with the Broadway musical song 'Don't Rain on My Parade' developing the narrative possibility that she will stand up to Lester. As she loudly sings 'No one's going to rain on MY PARADE', she pulls into the driveway to find Lester's new red sports car. This scene develops her point of view and the relationship between the characters as Lester continues to 'rain on her parade'. In the climactic final sequence of the film, Carolyn sits in her car listening to a self-belief tape telling her to stand up for herself. This diegetic sound edited against the action of Carolyn taking her gun out of the glove box establishes the narrative possibility that she will kill Lester.

The components of sound work together with each other and other production elements to create narrative. Examples can be seen and heard in many of the films discussed in this chapter. Remember when analysing a film to 'watch it' with your ears as well as your eyes.

Learning activities

1   Choose a scene from the fictional film narrative you are studying and discuss how the music, dialogue and sound effects are used to develop the narrative and develop character.

2   Find diegetic and non-diegetic examples of music, dialogue and sound effects from a fictional film narrative that you have studied.

3   Find a scene within your narrative text that uses silence and describe how it is used to develop a narrative convention.

EDITING

Editing is the process of placing images and sounds in an order that tells the story and creates emotion in the audience. The process of assembling the sound and vision during post-production is extremely important.

Editing is the process of looking at the footage shot by the cinematographer, selecting the most appropriate shots and then assembling them into a sequence that conveys the narrative to the audience. But editing is far more than this. It can establish setting, develop character, express point of view, drive the story and restructure time. Editing sets the pace of a film and provokes mood and emotion within the audience. It is more than just putting one shot behind another. The editor uses different types of edits or transitions to move the audience from one image to another. Each transition serves a different purpose, depending on the effect that the director and editor want to create. Never forget that editing is the process of combining image and sound.

Character development

The opening sequence of *Little Miss Sunshine* provides a good example of how editing sound and vision together can be used for to develop character:

1   The first shot of the film is an extreme close up of a young girl, Olive Hoover, wearing glasses. On the surface of her glasses, the audience sees a reflection of a television screen featuring the Miss America Pageant and hears the non-diagetic soundtrack and the diagetic sound of the television host announcing the winner.

2   There is a cut to the action on the television screen, then …

3   A cut back to Olive, then …

4   A cut back to the screen, which first pauses and then rewinds. As Olive replays the scene on the television, the audience sees a series of shots of her practising her reaction to winning Miss America as she hears the television host announce the winner once again.

It becomes apparent to the audience that Olive wants to become a beauty queen. As the audience watches Olive standing in front of the screen, they hear a voice-over of her father Richard. The film now transitions to the next scene introducing him as he talks about being a winner through his nine-step program. The film introduces the six characters in the Hoover family, one at a time, by using the editing of sound and vision to provide some understanding of each family member's character traits.

Learning activity

Watch the opening sequence of *Little Miss Sunshine* and describe how sound and image are used in combination to develop the characters.

Narration and telling story

In most fictional narrative films, editing serves a:

- narrative function
- emotional function
- intellectual function.

NARRATIVE FUNCTION

A simple example of narrative editing is when you are watching a character who hears an offscreen noise and turns their head to the right of screen. To follow the narrative, the editor will then cut to a shot of whatever made the noise. For example, something in the oven has exploded, the editor cuts back to the character to see their reaction and then back to the oven, which is now on fire. A narrative cut can also express a character's thoughts.

In *American Beauty*, immediately after Lester meets Angela, the editor cuts to a shot of a floating rose petal and then onto Lester as he lays in bed staring at the ceiling as the rose petal lands on him. The next cut is a close-up of Lester as rose petals descend upon him as he stares upward. There is a cut to a shot of Angela on the ceiling lying naked in a sea of rose petals falling one by one. The sequence continues to cut back and forth between Lester smiling dreamily up at the ceiling and Angela smiling seductively down at him. In this scene, the editing has developed Lester's character and point of view as well as the narrative possibility that Lester may have an affair with Angela.

Another example of editing that develops character is in *The Ploughman's Lunch* (1983). The film's protagonist is a cynical and ethically questionable journalist. He is annoyed at being forced to travel away from London to attend his mother's funeral. In the funeral scene, the audience is given a deeper understanding of the character through the editing. As his mother's coffin is lowered into the ground, director, Richard Eyre, cuts from the lowering coffin to a shot of the journalist checking his watch. This simple cut does more to reveal his character than any dialogue ever could.

EMOTIONAL FUNCTION

The way that a film is cut together can produce an emotional response from the audience. This can be done in a three ways:

1   The speed of the cuts: The speed of the cutting helps to place the audiences viewing and thought patterns in sync with the mood of the film. In an action sequence, many short shots are put together to create excitement. A sad scene such as the death of a loved one will consist of long slow shots being placed together.

2   Directional cut: Consider a scene in which two characters are driving fast cars through busy city streets. If the editing has both cars travelling from the left of screen to the right, cutting between them will create the feeling of a chase or a race. However, if the editor cuts between a car moving from the right of the screen to the left and a second car moving from the left of the screen to the right of screen, the audience begins to anticipate a crash between the two cars. Each sequence builds totally different expectations.

3 Tone (light) cut: A sequence of dark images of a character or setting can produce a feeling of despair and gloom. Slowly adding shots of brighter and brighter light can lift the tone from despair to hope.

INTELLECTUAL FUNCTION

With editing, a director can plant an intellectual thought or concept in the audience's mind. In his short film *The Immigrant* (1917) (see Figure 6.3.10), director Charlie Chaplin suggests such an intellectual concept to the audience as the immigrants arrive in New York Harbour. The audience is shown the title 'The arrival in the Land of Liberty'. This is followed by a shot of a group of immigrants joyfully looking at the Statue of Liberty, their faces filled with hope. Chaplin then cuts to a shot of an immigration official roping the immigrants together like cattle. This juxtaposition of images suggests the view that the immigrant's hope for freedom will be met with a far harsher reality and questions the notion of freedom in America.

MISE EN SCÈNE

Mise en scène translates as 'put in the scene' or 'staging'. Film is fundamentally a collaborative art and the elements that are put into a scene are put there by production designers, art directors, costume designers and cinematographers in collaboration with the director. The production designer will create the architectural and spatial design of the set, which will be very different for a film set in a palace and one set in a submarine. For the palace, the design will highlight large, spacious luxury while the submarine film will consist of small, claustrophobic spaces. The art director will design elements such as wall and floor coverings, furnishings and props, and work in conjunction with costume designers and the cinematographer. The cinematographer will light the scene, frame the shots and block or plan the movements of the camera to compliment the director's blocking of the acting. How filmmakers visually compose a scene will provoke particular responses, moods and emotions within the audience.

FIGURE 6.3.10 *The Immigrant* (1917)

FIGURES 6.3.11 AND 6.3.12 *The Last Emperor* (1987)

FIGURE 6.3.13 In *Lars and the Real Girl* (2007), notice the pink tones and how Gus (Paul Schneider) is positioned in the far right of the frame

Colour

Colour is often a key component in *mise en scène* as it is associated with emotion and mood. In 1985, Director Bernado Bertolucci commissioned Vittorio Storaro as director of photography for his film, *The Last Emperor* (1987). The film explores the life journey of Pu Yi, the last emperor of China, through childhood, adolescence, adulthood, exile, prison and finally his return to China as an old man. From his first reading of Pu Yi's story, Storaro determined to use colours to symbolise the various stages and moods of his life.

Storaro used the following colours as symbols:

- red for birth (see Figure 6.3.11)
- orange for growth
- yellow for his crowning as emperor (see Figure 6.3.12)
- grey for waiting
- green for rebirth through knowledge
- blue for liberty
- indigo for power
- violet for passage
- white for balance.

Colour is also used as a motif in *Lars and the Real Girl*. Pink is used to represent love and happiness. The exterior scenes in the film are dominated by snow and cloud, creating a *mise en scène* dominated by the colour grey. The costuming also reflects the grey lonely tone of Lars's life. Lars is dressed in dull lifeless shades of grey, blue and brown. His brother Gus is costumed in grey tones throughout the film. When Lars meets Bianca, the colour pink is injected into the film. Bianca wears pink and she stays in Lars's late mother's pink-walled, pink-furnished room. Later when Lars goes bowling with Margo, he uses a pink bowling ball.

Visual composition

The visual composition of elements within the frame can also develop character and character relationships. Look at the way the characters are arranged in this scene from *Lars and the Real Girl*. You will notice that Gus, who is embarrassed and angry about Lars's infatuation for a doll, is always placed farthest away from Bianca (see Figure 6.3.13). Gus is dressed in grey and actor Paul Schneider contributes to the *mise en scène* through his agitated and angry acting.

CITIZEN KANE

Citizen Kane is a film about a man surrounded by riches who simply yearns for love. Orson Welles and cinematographer Gregg Toland used the visual composition of his shots to develop the tragedy of Charles Foster Kane. Kane's relationship with his second wife Susan demonstrates how he destroys his chance for love. When Kane first meets Susan, she is a simple girl living in a boarding house who has never even heard of Charles Foster Kane. In Susan, Kane sees the chance of finding the love he lost as a child. Indeed, when he meets Susan he is on his way to a warehouse to look at his late mother's belongings. As Kane puts it, 'I was going to take a look at them. You know a sort of sentimental journey'. At the start, their love is tender and warm and this is reflected in the visual composition of the scene when Susan sings to Kane in the apartment he has bought her.

In the scene shown in Figure 6.3.14, the soft light illuminates Susan's face as she sits at the piano singing to Kane while he sits comfortably in his chair smoking his pipe. Props within the frame add to the feeling of warmth and tenderness. A bowl of fruit sits on the table next to Kane and there is even a teddy bear in the foreground of the shot, perhaps a gift from him to her. Compare this scene to the composition of Figure 6.3.15. It is now several years later and Susan sits alone in Xanadu, the palace

FIGURES 6.3.14 AND 6.3.15 Compare how the visual composition of each shot creates a mood that develops the plot of *Citizen Kane* (1941)

that Kane has built for her. Look at how the lighting of the background and the deep focus of the camera creates the feeling of Susan being isolated in this huge, cold and lonely castle. Compare the props within the frame to those in the first shot. No teddy bears this time, just cold, lifeless statues. Kane is now removed from the frame and soon Susan will remove herself from the relationship.

DEPTH OF FOCUS

Deep or shallow focus can also contribute to the *mise en scène* and help with character development, setting and point of view. In the film *The Wrestler* (2008), the life of a lonely man, Randy 'The Ram' Robinson, trying to reconnect with his estranged daughter, is examined. In the scene shown in Figure 6.3.16, Randy is trying to call his daughter. Notice how the deep focus and the lonely cold, urban street location help to establish the character's point of view. No one else is in the shot, just him, looking ragged, cold and lonely as he talks into the graffiti-tagged pay phone.

ACTING

Acting is perhaps the most obvious of the production elements used in film. How the actor portrays the character through body actions, posture and delivery of lines develops the character and creates a relationship between the character and the audience.

Some actors bring qualities to a character simply because of their acting reputation. For example, the audience would find a well-meaning, but clumsy character easy to believe if played by an actor known for their comic abilities, such as Melissa McCarthy or Tina Fey. The audience is immediately sympathetic to such a character, knowing this actor has played this 'type' before. On the other hand, it is sometimes hard for an audience to believe characters played against 'type'. Melissa McCarthy in a serious role may not be believable to an audience.

Learning activity

Choose four scenes from the film narrative that you are studying and discuss how the *mise en scène* develops the plot, character, setting and narrative possibilities.

FIGURE 6.3.16 Mickey Rourke as Randy 'The Ram' Robinson in *The Wrestler* (2008)

LOOKING INSIDE THE STORY

As part of your study, you need to be able to look beyond the story and see how the narrative has been structured through technical codes and narrative conventions. This is not always obvious. Well-made films often seem seamless and audiences are swept into the story conventions like the character development and narrative possibilities. When studying the narrative structure of a film, you need to look for the seams. You need to work out how the filmmaker has pieced the film together through the technical codes to not only tell a story but also communicate ideological values through narrative conventions.

While that might sound like a complex task, you already have the skills to do it. If you thought about the number of screen narratives you have seen in your lifetime they would run into the thousands at least. As an audience, you have developed the ability to read the representations being presented to you through the technical codes and you have developed understandings of story conventions.

Think of an ongoing drama such as *Game of Thrones* (see Figure 6.3.17), *The Vampire Diaries* or *Pretty Little Liars*. All of these screen narratives use the convention of a cliffhanger at the end of the episodes. While you may feel frustrated that the episode has ended and the narrative has not been concluded, you are not confused. You understand that the narrative convention of presenting narrative possibilities to engage the audience in the story has been used. You further understand that the conventions of narrative storytelling mean that the story will continue in the next episode.

Similarly, you also understand the common narrative understandings of technical codes. For example, a character's voice-over about her childhood edited against a black and white scene of a young girl is understood by a modern audience to be a flashback. Technical codes like camera elements, acting, *mise en scène*, editing, lighting and sound are not new concepts to you. You just need to develop a more conscious awareness of them and be able to describe how they communicate story conventions to the audience.

FIGURE 6.3.17 *Game of Thrones*

EXAMINING THE TECHNICAL CODES

The first step in examining the technical codes process is to view a screen story. Experience it as any other audience member would. Watch, listen, laugh, cry, be thrilled or be bored. Then watch it again and again and again and when you do, do not just watch the story, watch the construction.

Notice the technical codes and make notes about them that you can use when writing about the text. Figure 6.3.18 will assist you to write about a scene in analysing how a director has used the technical codes to make the audience feel and think.

TECHNICAL CODES	INSTRUCTIONS AND QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN EXAMINING A SCENE

Lighting	• What was the lighting like?
	• Describe the lighting in terms of it being:
	  • expressionistic or naturalistic
	  • hard or soft
	  • high contrast or low contrast
	  • key or low key.
	• Describe how the lighting makes the audience feel.
	• Consider how the light is placed on the characters within a scene. For example, is one character lit more brightly than another?
	• Are shadows used to develop characters or character relationships?
	• Is light used to establish point of view?

Camera • Camera angle • Camera movement • Camera lens • Camera shot	• What was the camera doing? Zooming or panning? • What camera angles were being used? High angles, level angles or low angles? • Make a note of the framing of shots. For example, are the characters in the same shot or alone?
Sound • Dialogue • Music and sound effects	• Listen to the soundscape of the scene. • What sound effects are present and why are they there? • Make a note of any significant dialogue helping the audience understand the characters and the narrative. • Is there a voice-over? • Is music used to establish mood? • How is that particular piece of music making the audience feel? • Are song lyrics helping to establish character point of view? • Do not forget the silence, which is a sound element that can be used by a director to build tension, develop suspense or establish mood within a scene.
Editing	• Consider the pace of the editing. • Was the cutting of the scene fast? • Were there multiple shots edited together in quick succession against fast music, edited together with quick, loud sound effects? • Was the editing slow? • Were there many shots or just a few and how long did they last? For example, in scenes trying to establish a negative change in a character relationship, the number of shots will be minimal while the pace of the editing might speed up in a series of close-ups of each character as they argue.
Mise en scène	• How did the *mise en scène* work to develop your emotions? • What colours are used? • Describe the setting/location. • How were characters placed in positions within the *mise en scène*? For example, characters placed apart from each other can create a feeling of separation or estrangement.
Acting	• Did the acting work engage your interest in the character's point of view? • Describe the actors' facial expressions, body posture and the use of voice. • What skills is each actor using to establish their character?

FIGURE 6.3.18 Technical codes used in screen stories

Step 1: Write out the key plot points of the text in the opening, development and closing sequences of the text:

a How has the main character been introduced to the audience?

b What is the audience's response to the character?

c Does the character change throughout the course of the narrative?

d What cause and effect chains of events happen in the story to prompt such changes and explain the character's motivation for change?

Note: It might be helpful for you to make note of the cause and effect chains of events throughout the film. Choose an important point in the story and explain how the narrative has been progressed at this point through the cause and effect chain.

Step 2: Identify a key relationship within the narrative:

a How do these characters feel about one another?

b Examine the narrative conventions that communicate this to the audience. For example, do the characters do and say things that communicate the relationship or establish narrative possibilities about where the relationship might be heading?

Step 3: Establish whose point of view the story is being told from:

a Write down how you have drawn this conclusion. For example, point of view may be obvious through the use of a voice-over or the fact that the main character is in every scene. Perhaps all of the other characters revolve around the world of the main character.

b Try and identify a scene in which point of view changes to another character and explain the reason why you have reached this conclusion.

Step 4: Consider the setting of the narrative:

a How does the setting help to tell the story?

b Does the setting define the genre?

c Does the setting explain character motivations and decisions?

d Does the setting help establish mood within the world of the story and in the audience's mind?

FIGURE 6.3.19 Narrative conventions

EXPLORING NARRATIVE CONVENTIONS

Another way to analyse the film is to start with the story conventions and the narrative structure of a text. For example, is the story told in a linear conventional narrative progression or does it manipulate the conventional structures and tell the story in some other non-linear style? Figure 6.3.19 will assist you to explore narrative conventions.

TECHNICAL CODES AND NARRATIVE CONVENTIONS

After you have examined the technical codes and narrative conventions, consider how both together assist you to 'look inside the story'.

The narrative is engaging to the audience because the events are edited together in a non-linear unconventional manner. Editing can contribute to the conventional time structure of the narrative by placing the events in chronological order. Or, for example, the editing of the black and white flashback of the girl from an earlier time reveals cause for her actions as an adult. The acting in a particular scene communicates the development of a character from weak to strong. The refocusing of the camera onto a specific object or person has been used to

communicate point of view within the narrative. Perhaps the setting of a melancholy story in winter allows for a *mise en scène* of dominated by a grey colour scheme and harsh, cold lighting.

Remember that very little happens in the making of a screen story by accident. View your texts with an enquiring mind and, remember, you already know how screen stories work. You just need to be more conscious of the technical codes and narrative conventions.

Learning activity

Choose a scene from the fictional film narrative you are studying and record a commentary analysing at least two of the following production elements: camera, lighting, *mise en scène*, sound, editing and acting.

Your discussion should examine how the production elements combine, with at least two of the following story elements to engage the audience into the narrative: narrative conventions, narrative possibilities, character development, setting, structuring of time, cause and effect, point of view and narrative progression.

6.4 Non-fictional narrative

Non-fictional narratives in screen stories aim to be as 'realistic' as possible, keeping as close as possible to the event or participants they are representing.

FICTIONAL AND NON-FICTIONAL NARRATIVE

Non-fictional and fictional narrative have much in common as they are both constructions. This means both non-fictional and fictional narrative have been made by a particular creator or group of creators for a particular purpose, whether that is to entertain or inform. Both share the same technical and symbolic codes and narrative conventions, they just apply them differently. The main difference is in the source material and how it is treated. Non-fictional narratives operate to appear as 'realistic' as possible; they try to be faithful to the event or participants they are representing and their goal is to inform and/or influence an audience and to uncover a 'truth'.

EARLY NON-FICTIONAL NARRATIVES

The earliest films were non-fiction, what film historians call 'actuality films'. Film was in its infancy and often the fact that there were moving images was enough to fascinate audiences. Among the earliest actuality films are *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory*), *The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat Station*, and *The Melbourne Cup* (1896). It was not too long before audiences grew bored with watching everyday scenes. Actuality films became short newsreels and fictional narratives came to dominate.

EARLY NON-FICTIONAL FILMMAKERS

In the 1920s, filmmakers began to see a filmed reality as an artistic endeavour and then as a way to educate, inform and possibly influence an audience.

Walter Ruttman

Walter Ruttman created a representation of a day in the life of Berlin. In *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* (1927) (see Figure 6.4.1), he edited together actuality footage, but with a great deal of manipulation. Now the film would be considered to be more of an art montage than a non-fictional narrative.

FIGURE 6.4.1 *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* (1927) was an early film where actuality footage met with art principles.

FIGURE 6.4.2 In *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929), Vertov continually drew his audience's attention to the construction of the film, and so to the construction of a reflection of reality.

FIGURE 6.4.3 Flaherty's film *Nanook of the North* (1922) was the forerunner of the invisible observer style of documentary, even though he manipulated the 'reality'. In this image Nanook hunts with a spear; in reality, he hunted with a rifle.

Dziga Vertov

In 1929, Dziga Vertov made *Man with a Movie Camera* (see Figure 6.4.2). Vertov had been making short documentaries since 1922 but this was a full-length film. Vertov's film is about a day in the life of a film crew working in a number of Russian cities. However, the film is more about the construction of a documentary and foregrounding the filmmaking process. Audiences see the cameraman shooting a scene. There is a cut to the camera's view and then to the editor looking at the film that has just been shot and then back to the initial shots. Scenes and shots are superimposed over each other, screens are split, frames are frozen and then re-animated, footage is sped up and slowed down and stop motion animation is used to make the camera and its tripod appear to be a living being. In short, Vertov breaks all the conventions of fictional film. The point for Vertov was to show the audience that a film is a construction of a reality, not reality itself. This film laid the groundwork for what can now be called the 'alternative non-fictional moving image narrative'.

Robert Flaherty

In the USA, during the same period, non-fictional moving image narrative was following a very different path. In 1922, Robert Flaherty made *Nanook of the North* (see Figure 6.4.3), which was a look at the life of an Inuit family. The camerawork and filmmaking process were invisible and Flaherty treated the camera (and so the audience) as an invisible observer. The reality was that Flaherty intervened a great deal, making the family change into traditional clothes, re-enact scenes and change their

hunting methods. He even built igloos with one side open to make interior shots possible. This film was perhaps the first example of what can be called the 'traditional non-fictional moving image narrative'.

TRADITIONAL AND ALTERNATIVE NON-FICTIONAL MOVING IMAGE NARRATIVES

Alternative non-fictional moving image narratives usually have the filmmaker as a participant in the story and the act of filmmaking is foregrounded. Audiences often see the film crew setting up, the camera is often visible and the filmmaker, rather than commenting on the events, is commenting on how they are trying to capture the events, often speaking directly to the camera. The process of selection, omission and construction is made obvious. Creators in this vein are Michael Moore and Chantal Akerman in film, and John Safran in television. It can be said that non-fictional moving image narratives are a fiction like any other.

Traditional non-fictional moving image narratives are characterised by the seeming invisibility of the camera and the filmmaking process. The audience is given the impression that they are invisible observers witnessing events that just happen to unfold before their eyes; however, there may be staged footage and recreations.

Traditional non-fictional moving image narrative techniques can usually be found in nature or science documentaries, such as those of David Attenborough, and historical and social documentaries, which usually rely on the authority figure's voice over archival footage or recreations. The process of selection, omission and construction is concealed.

TECHNICAL CODES AND NARRATIVE CONVENTIONS

The technical codes and narrative conventions in non-fictional moving image narratives operate in much the same way as in fictional moving image narratives. They allow the audience to read the film and extract meaning and they are governed by the need to appear naturalistic, which is to look like the natural world we live in—to recreate a reality. The technical codes and narrative conventions for non-fictional moving image narratives below should be read in conjunction with those for fictional narratives.

CAMERA

The film format for non-fictional moving image narratives has changed over the years. When film was used, cameras usually used 16 mm film. Sixteen millimetre cameras were lightweight, easily carried and moved and the quality was good enough for projection or telecast. With the advent of digital technologies, nearly all non-fictional moving image narratives are shot digitally, often on a DSLR. The DSLR is easy to use, flexible and, above all, unobtrusive. The camera is handheld and the shot is usually mid-shot and close-up for interviews or a long-shot establishing shot to set the context and establish the relationship between the characters/subjects and their environment.

FIGURE 6.4.4 Chinese artist Ai Weiwei and his crew film in Nuseirat refugee camp in the Gaza Strip

ACTING

Whether the participants are actors, characters or subjects has been an essential question in non-fictional moving image narratives. Some argue that any time a camera is turned on, the people in front of it become actors, even if they are acting as themselves. Others argue that, with continued exposure to the camera, those in front of it relax and stop acting. Of course, when scenes are dramatised, actors are employed; in non-fictional moving image narratives, it is necessary to make the distinction between subjects and actors; that is, subjects are real people or people being themselves while actors are playing a role or part.

MISE EN SCÈNE

The *mise en scène* or visual composition choices are in some ways limited in non-fictional moving image narratives. However, the filmmaker still makes choices when they can without upsetting the authenticity of the film's setting. Where they choose to set up the camera and position the subjects within the frame affects the audience's reading and interpretation. Through simple camera positioning, the filmmaker can make the viewer feel a particular way towards the subject or what they have said, as shown in Figure 6.4.5.

FIGURE 6.4.5 D.A. Pennebaker has carefully chosen where to film this clip of Bob Dylan. The *mise en scène* has been constructed by the filmmaker just as a fictional narrative would be.

EDITING

Editing in non-fictional moving image narratives is usually linear; there are no flashbacks or flash-forwards, but the story unfolds in chronological time. In traditional non-fictional moving image narratives, the editing tries to be invisible, whereas in the alternative non-fictional moving image narrative the editing may be highlighted to show the

maker's manipulation and construction. This can be seen in jump cuts or blips of white signal and white noise where the filmmaker is showing where cuts have been made to foreground the construction of the film or to be 'truthful' about the editing process.

Editing can change the timing or sequence of events to suit the message the filmmaker wants the audience to take away. Editing can place emphasis on a particular person, object or location, which can be positive or negative. Audiences can see this at its most obvious in reality television shows like *Survivor* where before someone is blindsided at tribal council, viewers see the plotters talking, then there is an edit to a snake or scorpion and then a cut back to the plotters. It is not hard to read the maker's intention. In addition to this selection of images, editing can also omit actions, persons or dialogue, which can affect the audiences' reception.

LIGHTING

Lighting is usually unobtrusive, in keeping with the attempts to be 'realistic'. As most non-fictional moving image narratives are shot on location, the traditional studio three-point lighting of key, back and fill is not used. Instead, filmmakers have to make do with the light that is present. This is called 'available light' and may be augmented by a single fill light mounted on the camera. An exception to this can be when the maker wants to preserve the subject's anonymity and then the subject can be so starkly backlit that all we see is a silhouette.

SOUND

Sound is usually diegetic in non-fictional moving image narratives; that is, the sound is from the world of the film or the sounds that were present when the filming occurred. These diegetic sounds include dialogue, background noise or ambient sound. The main non-diegetic sounds in non-fictional moving image narratives are voice-over narration and music. In traditional non-fictional moving image narratives, the music is usually unobtrusive or complementary to the action. The voice-over narration in these narratives, particularly nature documentaries, is an authoritative one that tells the audience facts about what they are seeing and then directs their interpretation of those facts and the subject's actions. This is known in the industry as 'the voice of God', leaving little room for other interpretations.

FIGURE 6.4.6 David Attenborough is the authoritative narrator of nature documentaries and the classic 'voice of God', interpreting the scene for the viewer.

Alternative non-fictional moving image narratives often use sound in a different way. The voice-over is usually the creator who is talking about the filmmaking process and directing the viewer's attention to the film's construction.

The use of music is foregrounded and used by the maker to emphasise a point. Michael Moore uses music in this way in his film *Bowling for Columbine* (2002), where he uses The Beatles song 'Happiness Is a Warm Gun' over a montage of gun owners and shooting victims, and Louis Armstrong's 'What a Wonderful World' over footage of American military interventions in a number of countries.

Sound can also be manipulated, as can audiences, by the selective editing of sound. Dialogue from different conversations can be edited together or used as voice-over in a way the speaker never intended. These are known as 'frankenbites', combining the terms 'Frankenstein' and 'sound bite' to emphasise their constructed nature.

NARRATIVE CONVENTIONS OF NON-FICTIONAL MOVING IMAGE NARRATIVES

Similar to technical codes, the narrative conventions of a non-fictional moving image operate in much the same way as they do in narrative fiction. This section should be read in conjunction with the section on conventions of narrative fictional films.

NARRATIVE PROGRESSION

A non-fictional moving image narrative will usually follow the three-act structure of a fictional narrative: the opening, the development and the closing:

- The opening: The scene is set, the time and place of the story is established and audiences are introduced to the characters and the central questions that drive the narrative are asked. These questions can range from 'What happened?' to 'Why did this happen?', and 'Who is responsible, guilty or innocent?'

- The development: The characters are further developed, and motives and reasons are established and explored, as is the impact the events or persons may have had on others around them.

- The closing: The questions, motives, reasons and so on are resolved. The wrongly convicted may be set free, such as in *Making a Murderer* (2015), political corruption may be exposed, such as in *The Ambassador* (2011) or the political decision-making process may be exposed, such as in *The Fog of War* (2003). At the very least, the audience has learned something new. This style can be seen in the documentary film and television works of Louis Theroux and John Safran (see Figure 6.4.7).

FIGURE 6.4.7 John Safran is the *enfant terrible* of television non-fiction production, always placing his investigation at the centre of the work.

Viewers can see how this narrative plays out in Michael Moore's *Bowling for Columbine*. The opening looks at what happened at Columbine High School, and who did it, and establishes the direction of the film. The second act looks at why the students might have done what they did, what impact it had on those around them, and the greater issue of accessibility of guns and the violence that Moore argues is inherent in US culture. In the closing, audiences see Moore confronting who and what he considers to be responsible for US gun culture and, by implication, those responsible for the mass shootings.

FIGURE 6.4.8 Michael Moore may be posing the question, 'Which is more powerful?'

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Similar to fictional narrative, character is one of the elements that moves a non-fictional moving image narrative forward. Even though in non-fictional moving image narratives the characters are real, their role or function is similar to that of a fictional character. In non-fictional narratives, the characters do not have to be human—in nature documentaries, the animals themselves function as characters.

In alternative non-fictional moving image narratives, it is often the filmmaker who acts as the protagonist in their own story, a variation on the fictional Hero's Journey, as shown in Figure 6.4.9. This is where the hero begins in the ordinary world, enters an unknown world, overcomes

obstacles and challenges, and finally reveals secrets, which will often solve a mystery or add to our knowledge. In addition, the filmmaker can use technical and symbolic codes such as camera, lighting and editing to set up a character, and to make them likeable or not, or believable or not.

FIGURE 6.4.9 In *Sherman's March* (1985), Ross McElwee dresses in period costume at various points, shoots the film and appears as the narrator—he is a character in his own film.

POINT OF VIEW

Point of view is the position taken, usually by the filmmaker towards both the issue that is to be examined and the way it will be portrayed filmically. In a traditional non-fictional moving image narrative, the maker tries to present an objective point of view. The filmmaker wants it to appear as if the camera is invisible, a hidden observer. This functions to make the narrative seem realistic and to have a natural, seemingly objective point of view. Critics argue that this is dishonest and is trying to conceal the process of selection, omission and construction and, so, the point of view, values or ideology that the work is coming from. Alternative non-fictional moving image narratives do not attempt to conceal the point of view. The camera is acknowledged and so is the process of making the film; this makes the point that the work is coming from a particular point of view.

SETTING AND STRUCTURING OF TIME

In general, there is very little studio shooting in a non-fictional moving image narrative—apart from some interviews, most of the filming takes place on location. This preserves the 'realism' of the work. The choice of locations can raise questions of authenticity or manipulation.

Time in non-fictional moving image narratives is usually presented as linear. There are seldom flashbacks or flash-forwards and time unfolds in a chronological way; that is, the work starts at day one and continues day by day. Time is also compressed, just as it is in a fictional narrative work. This means that story time and screen time are not the same. The story may unfold over weeks, months or years, but it is condensed into one or two hours.

FIGURE 6.4.10 Sarah Koenig, the host of the podcast Serial, interviews a records custodian with the Baltimore City State's Attorney's Office

Learning activity

From the non-fictional moving image narrative texts you have viewed, complete the following tasks:
- Identify and list at least two examples of narrative conventions from each text.
- Explain why they are good examples of the use of narrative conventions in non-fictional moving image narratives.
- Explain what effect you think the narrative conventions have on an audience.
- Explain whose point of view you think is being presented in each of the films.
- Explain how the point of view is communicated.

AUDIO NON-FICTIONAL NARRATIVES—PODCASTS

Audio non-fictional narratives use technical codes and narrative conventions in much the same way as in fictional and non-fictional moving image narratives. They allow the audience to read the audio (in this case by listening) and extract meaning. The technical codes and narrative conventions for non-fictional audio narratives below should be read in conjunction with those for visual fictional and non-fictional narratives above.

WORDS

Words take on a different function when they are spoken rather than read. Accents and inflections can be used to build character information and make the audience feel a particular way towards a character. A person or character can be made to appear more or less trustworthy or believable simply by how they say something. A person with a broad Australian accent, speaking to someone with an upper-class English accent will create a response in the audience. This response is also dependent on setting. If these people met in the outback, it would be interpreted differently to if they met in London.

SOUNDS

The sounds heard in a non-fictional audio narrative are not there by accident (even those if recorded on location). They are there via a process of:

- selection: someone chose to record there or keep or put the sounds in
- omission: someone has taken or left some sounds out
- construction: someone has arranged the sounds in a certain order.

Sounds in non-fictional audio narratives can be classified into four main areas:

- Action: Sounds such as gunshots or explosions that tell the audience what is happening.
- Setting: Sounds such as waves breaking or traffic passing, which tell the audience where it is happening.
- Music: Music can be used as a theme, which is played at the beginning to introduce the program, to create a feeling or emotion or to provide additional information or comment.

- Silence: Silence is a very powerful tool, which can be used for dramatic effect, to express an emotion, or as an audio code to show that time has passed or a scene has ended.

CONVENTIONS

As with all narratives, the conventions operate in similar ways no matter what medium. A non-fictional audio narrative will usually follow the three-act structure of a fictional narrative: the opening, the development and the closing.

In the opening, the scene is set, the time and place of the story is established, and audiences are introduced to the characters and the central questions that drive the narrative are asked. These questions can range from 'What happened?' to 'Why did this happen?' and 'Who is responsible, guilty or innocent?'

In the development, the characters are further developed, and motives and reasons are established and explored, as is the impact the events or persons may have had on others around them.

In the closing, questions, motives, reasons and so on are resolved. This may take place over the course of one show such as in This American Life or over a number of episodes, as in the case of Serial.

Characters are introduced and developed via technical and symbolic codes and, in the case of shows like Serial, the narrator is a major character.

Time is manipulated, it is compressed, the events heard may have taken place over months or years, but we hear of them in a half-hour or hour-long episode. Time is also ordered by the use of flashbacks or flash-forwards.

Learning activities

1. From the non-fictional audio narrative texts (podcasts) you have listened to, identify at least two examples from each text for each of the narrative conventions above.

2. Describe why they are good examples of the use of narrative conventions in non-fictional audio narratives. What effect do they have on the audience?

3. What or whose point of view do you think is being presented in each of the podcasts? How is this gleaned from the work and how do you think the audience receives this?

FIGURE 6.4.11 This American Life host, Ira Glass

6.5 Narrative and ideology

All media products, in fact, all artistic products are produced within a variety of contexts, which can influence both the work and the way the audience receives or reads it.

MEDIA NARRATIVES AND IDEOLOGY

The times and conditions under which a media narrative was made help shape both the text and the way the audience understands it. Media narratives are created under and within a variety of contexts, such as social, cultural, ideological and institutional.

For example, a film made in Germany in 1938 would be shaped by the following contexts:

- social: how the various groups within German society were functioning under the Nazi regime
- cultural: how the film fitted into the German cultural scene, which could be the genre and what other films were being made at the same time
- institutional: how the German film industry/studio system worked
- ideological: how the film expressed the political thinking of the Nazi Party.

On the other hand, a film such as *Cabaret* (1972), while it is set in Nazi Germany, will tell audiences little about Germany in the 1930s, but will tell audiences a great deal about America in the 1970s and the 1970s US view of Nazi Germany.

CONTEXTS AND VIEWERS/READERS

All art and cultural products are produced via a society and the creators of these products are also products of that society. This means a film, television show or podcast can be seen as a cultural artifact: a construction that has been made in a particular place at a particular time. A text exists as a site of created meaning. The meaning is created, not just by the author or producer of the work, but also by the reader, audience or viewer. The 'meaning' or interpretation of a text is also influenced or mediated by the contexts and values of the society within which it was produced and viewed.

> Some cultural theoreticians argue that a text does not exist as a text until it is read, viewed or experienced by an audience.

This means the contexts—social, cultural, ideological or institutional—surrounding the text when it was made have influenced its making and the same contexts surrounding the viewer or reader will influence its reception.

INTERPRETING TEXTS

The interpretation of texts has proved, over the last 40 years to be an academic minefield. Modernist readings tended to look for a single underlying meaning or 'truth' coming directly from an author, which often denied the influence of ideological values on a text. In contrast, postmodernists see multiple meanings and interpretations in a text that is the product of a variety of discourses—the author being only one. Some postmodernists have argued that there are as many readings of a text as there are readers, and that all readings are valid. The French philosopher Jacques Lyotard called this 'eclectic' or 'junk' postmodernism. Perhaps the last word on this should go to Jacques Derrida, who is seen as one of the great postmodern philosophers. He believed that there was not an infinite number of meanings in a text, but that there is more than one and that not all interpretations were valid, just that the question must always remain open.

CONTEXTS AND REPRESENTATIONS IN MEDIA TEXTS

The representations contained in media texts are usually where audiences can see the physical presence of the contexts, including ideological beliefs and values and institutions. Representations, often embodied in individual characters, can depict:

- individuals: these are usually characters in a text and they can be fictional or real, for example, a documentary or a combination of these. A good example of this is the representations of the hip-hop group N.W.A. in *Straight Outta Compton* (2015)
- ideas or concepts: these can be abstract ideas such as freedom, liberty, equality or independence, in films such as *Cry Freedom* (1987) or *Chasing Asylum* (2016)

FIGURE 6.5.1 The evil corporation in *Avatar* (2009) is willing to do anything for profit.

■ institutions: these can range from abstract institutions such as the law and authority to concrete institutions such as the police or banks. Often these institutions are personified in characters. Corporations are often represented as evil, money/profit obsessed, uncaring and ecologically destructive such as in *Avatar* (2009) (see Figure 6.5.1) and *Aliens* (1986)

■ social groups: these are usually ethnic, racial or religious groups. Examples of these are representations of Native Americans in countless films, Iraqis in *The Hurt Locker*, teenagers in *Napoleon Dynamite* (2004) or fictional groups such at the Na'vi in *Avatar*.

IDEOLOGICAL CONTEXTS

Political, social and cultural theorists have argued for centuries about the meaning of the term, 'ideology'. It can be defined as a system of beliefs and values that are held or shared by a social group, class or institution. In a political sense, it is often taken to mean the beliefs or values held by a political movement or party such as a conservative ideology, a progressive ideology, or communist, fascist or left-wing ideologies. Ideology is most obvious in media narratives that have clear political themes, such as *Wag the Dog* (1997) or *Frost/Nixon* (2008), or those about clashes between political systems, such as those produced during

the Cold War between America and the USSR. The period from 1950 to the 1990s saw Hollywood produce virulently anti-communist narratives where the ideology of the superiority of the US system was evident.

ADVANCED DISCUSSIONS ON IDEOLOGY

Stuart Hall

Cultural theorist Stuart Hall described ideology as mental frameworks including language and representations which different classes and social groups use to define and make sense of a society.

Louis Althusser and Slavog Zizek

Other theoreticians take this much further. Theoreticians such as Louis Althusser saw ideology, in part, as our lived social relations—a place where the political may overlap with the social. Althusser and others also see ideology as a system of beliefs in which power is produced, distributed and maintained in a society. Althusser and more recently Slavog Zizek describe ideologies as being distributed via soft and hard power or the ideological state apparatus and the repressive state apparatus.

In essence, what Althusser and Zizek are saying is that power can be both hard and repressive or soft. Hard power can be applied through the police or army, whereas

soft power can be employed via cultural products or institutions such as schools or universities.

As a media student, it is soft power or the ideological state apparatus that needs to be studied, in particular the influence of soft power in media narratives. Althusser and Zizek argue that 'soft' power works to preserve the system and discourage disruptions that might disturb the political, economic and social status quo. The film *Triumph of the Will* (1935) (see Figure 6.5.2), was produced to glorify the Nazi election campaign of 1934. The film is an example of a soft power praising a hard power (the Nazi Party and Hitler).

FIGURE 6.5.2 *Triumph of the Will* (1935)

Jean Baudrillard and Umberto Eco

Other philosophers like Jean Baudrillard and Umberto Eco argue that the media and its products reproduce and reinforce dominant ideologies via the creation of a 'hyper-reality', which operates also to both perpetuate and distribute ideologies.

Roland Barthes

Roland Barthes also thought ideologies arose and were distributed and perpetuated via what he called society's mythologies. This is where meaning has become part of an unquestioned belief that then tends to reinforce the dominant beliefs that a society holds. He used the image in Figure 6.5.3 as an example. In 1955, France was fighting a number of wars in its colonies to keep control over its overseas empire, and people within France, the colonies and around the world were starting to question whether colonies and empires should exist in a free world. Barthes went into a barber shop and, while he was waiting, he picked up a copy of the popular magazine *Paris Match*. On the cover was this image. After seeing this he wrote:

> On the cover, a young Negro in a French uniform is saluting, with his eyes uplifted, probably fixed on a fold of the tricolour (the French Flag). All this is the meaning of the picture. But, whether naïvely or not, I see very well what it signifies to me: that France is a great Empire, that all her sons, without any colour discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag, and that there is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this Negro in serving his so-called oppressors.

Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Seuil, 1957

FIGURE 6.5.3 The cover of *Paris Match*, 25 June 1955

> Josef Stalin, leader of the communist party that ruled the USSR (Russia) from 1919 until its break up in 1997, is reputed to have commented on the power of film as an ideological tool, and said, 'If I could control the medium of the American motion picture, I would need nothing else to convert the entire world to communism'.

The ideological context is, for many theorists, inseparable from the social context. An ideology can also be seen as being composed of attitudes towards discourses, beliefs and values. The ideological context can be seen as a result of the interplay between discourses, beliefs and values.

SOCIAL CONTEXT

The social context a film is produced in can be seen as the social conditions and the values or discourses that were current in the society at that particular time.

Discourse can be described as the interrelationship between media texts and those who create and consume them. Media texts are shaped by, and form part of, discourses that may have a relationship to a social value such as an attitude towards gender or the conflicted views a society may have towards technology.

The relationship between discourses and beliefs or social values can be described as follows:

■ Discourses are the product of broader social, political and economic formations or systems of thought that are composed, among other things of social values. People may have broad discourses of ideas or concepts such as liberty, equality, authority and science that may run over very extended periods of time. Theorists such as Michel

Foucault see discourses as the means by which power may be created, distributed or resisted within a society. A discourse is an abstract concept.

■ A social belief or value can be seen as an attitude towards a discourse that a society has at a particular place at a particular time. Social values may remain in a society over a number of years and generally change slowly. For example, the discourse of justice, as enshrined in the US constitution, can be seen in the film *To Kill A Mockingbird*, which was made in 1960, while the social value is the attitude that people should be treated justly across and within the USA.

Discourse of technology

The discourse or interrelationship between media texts and consumers can be examined through attitudes towards technology, and in films and television (see Figures 6.5.4, 6.5.5 and 6.5.6). Figure 6.5.4 is from the US television series *The Jetsons* (1962–1963), where a utopian

FIGURE 6.5.4 *The Jetsons* (1962–1963)

FIGURE 6.5.5 *Blade Runner* (1982)

FIGURE 6.5.6 *Astro Boy* (1963)

attitude to the discourse of technology can be identified. In the series, technology is seen as aiding humans and benefitting society. In contrast, in *Blade Runner* (see Figure 6.5.5) audiences can recognise the dystopian attitude to technology, where it is not saving humanity but threatening it. The difference between the utopian worldview of the *The Jetsons* and the dystopian worldview of *Blade Runner* cannot be simply explained by the fact that they were created in different decades. Differences can also be seen between societies in the same timeframe. The utopian attitude to technology in *The Jetsons* can be compared to the dystopian attitude seen in *Astro Boy* (1963) (see Figure 6.5.6), which was produced in Japan. The different discourses may be explained in terms of the effect of one society creating and dropping the atom bomb (benefiting from the technology) and the other society being on the receiving end.

The media narratives you have studied have been created under certain conditions (ideological, institutional and cultural), which will, to a greater or lesser extent, have a bearing on the beliefs and values of the media narrative. The period when the text was produced is obviously important; there is a great deal of difference between a television show that was produced in 1957 and one that was produced in 2017.

DOMINANT IDEOLOGIES, AND OPPOSITIONAL AND EMERGING VALUES AND BELIEFS

Remember that not everyone in a particular society holds the same beliefs or values and that not all texts reflect them. The dominant ideology will be composed of discourses, beliefs and values.

CHANGING DISCOURSES AND IDEOLOGIES

It is also important to remember that discourses and ideologies are never static and they are often in conflict with each other as societies change.

Slavery

Attitudes towards slavery is a good example of how discourses and ideologies can change over time and also how a society can hold what appear to be conflicting beliefs and values.

In many ancient societies, slavery was considered neither good nor bad, but normal. This attitude can be seen in their cultural artefacts or products. This could be called a dominant belief or value as it is the one that most people in the society held.

Over time, and subject to a variety of discourses including religion and The Enlightenment movement of the eighteenth century, groups opposed to slavery developed. The idea that slavery could be wrong became an emerging belief or value. An emerging belief or value may be against the dominant ideology or it may emerge alongside the dominant ideology. An emerging belief or value may become oppositional or it may fade away.

In the case of slavery, the emerging belief or value became oppositional. An oppositional belief or value is one that is positioned against the dominant beliefs, values and discourses. In this case the dominant belief or value was slavery was 'good and normal' and the oppositional one was that slavery was an abomination and that all humans should be free. The belief or value of the attitude to slavery moves through a common path for ideological beliefs or values, from the dominant 'this is normal' through the emerging 'something is wrong if we think this' to the oppositional 'we need to change this' until what was once oppositional may become the new dominant ideology.

MEDIA PRODUCTS

Ideology, beliefs, values and, with these, power and mythologies—be they political, economic or social—can be seen in and distributed by media products. One way that this can happen is the media narrative can describe a world that we see as 'normal' and one that projects our society and its ideologies, beliefs and values as 'right and normal', while portraying other ideas, ways of governing and cultures or outsider groups as 'not normal'. This links with the concept of representations and values discussed earlier explaining how the media is not neutral—its values influence the representations that are constructed. This also extends to propaganda films that promote a particular ideological and political stance such as *Triumph of the Will*.

Narrative theory helps show that characters are composed of story and production elements. It is also often via these elements that ideologies, beliefs and values can be identified. How a character relates to other characters, their traits and role in the narrative are some of the story elements that can reveal ideologies, beliefs and values. Lighting, camera, and placement within the *mise en scène* are some of the technical codes that also help reveal ideologies, beliefs and values.

IDEOLOGICAL CONTEXTS: GENDER

Media narratives are produced within a variety of contexts. The study or discourse of media contexts (ideological and social) is shaped by gender. Attitude towards gender—positive or negative, dominant or oppositional—has informed media narratives in the past and continues to inform them today. For much of its history, the major producer of media narratives in the English-speaking world has been the USA and Hollywood in particular. The industry has been dominated by men, both in front of and behind the camera. This reflects the dominance of males in Western society where men have been associated with action, work and production, and women have been associated with home and the body.

The dominance of men has meant that the primacy of males has been a dominant belief or value in the ideology of gender. The world of film production has been (and many argue still is) male-dominated. Men have been scriptwriters and the scripts have reflected their world, which has been typically male, white, middle-class and heterosexual. So, the protagonists have been male and the camera has told the story from the male point of view. Men are the subjects (who the film is about) and women are the objects (things to be taken, prized or claimed). This is reinforced by positioning the viewer in the male viewing position—what Laura Mulvey calls 'the male gaze'. This male gaze makes the audience see the film from the same perspective as the scriptwriters, directors and technical crew; that is, male, white, middle-class and heterosexual. Feminist critics argue that, in this way, the dominant ideological value of male primacy has shaped and, in many cases, continues to shape the values attached to gender in society.

FEMALE STEREOTYPES AND TROPES IN MEDIA NARRATIVES

The ideological values around gender have tended to make the role of women in media narratives stereotypical; that is, they have conformed to specific character types or their roles have specific character traits that are well-known to audiences, but tend to be fixed and oversimplified.

> A trope is an overused plot device, narrative convention or even character trait. Audiences can see a trope as a form of shorthand or cliché that the viewer is familiar with.

Female tropes include women as:

- materialistic: Women are as mainly concerned with accumulating material things, largely through shopping. This stereotype can be seen in films ranging from *Pretty Woman* (1990) and *Confessions of a Shopaholic* (2009) to both *Sex in the City* films (2008 and 2010).

- psychotic: Women are dangerous to men, particularly if the male has turned them down or away. This stereotype can be seen in films ranging from *Basic Instinct* (1992) to *Gone Girl* (2014). Susan Faludi in her book *Backlash* summarises this as follows: 'The good women are all subservient and bland ... the female villains are all women who fail to give up their independence'. This is certainly the case in the film *Fatal Attraction* (1987), shown in Figure 6.5.7.

FIGURE 6.5.7 Glenn Close and Michael Douglas in *Fatal Attraction* (1987)

- desperate: Women must have a male partner to be fulfilled in life. This is a very common trope and should be compared to the typical male goals, which are career-, action- or money-oriented. This can be seen in *Trainwreck* (2015), *He's Just Not That Into You* (2009) or any of the *Bridget Jones* films.

- submissive: Women submit to men in order to find true happiness. Examples of this are *Twilight* (2008), *Beauty and the Beast* (various versions), the *Fifty Shades* films (2015, 2017), and *The Little Mermaid* (1989)—as Ursula says, 'It's she who holds her tongue who gets her man'.

- transformed: Women have to change to become better. This is one of the most common tropes in Western culture, from Cinderella and other fairy stories to *Pretty Woman*, *The Devil Wears Prada* (2006) and many others.

FIGURE 6.5.8 Jennifer Lawrence as Katniss Everdeen in *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay—Part 1* (2014)

An increasing number of films, but still a minority, are trying to subvert these tropes by having a strong, independent, female lead character who is defined by her goals; for example, the character Katniss in *The Hunger Games* films (see Figure 6.5.8).

The cartoonist Alison Bechdel and her friend Liz Wallace came up with a test to see if a film conformed to the dominant ideological values surrounding gender. The test is simple:

- The movie has to have at least two women in it.

- They have to talk to each other.

- They have to talk about something other than a man.

Learning activities

1   What role do women play in either of the media narratives you have watched? Include in your response, information about their career or job; their actions; their relationships to others, both male and female; and how they look.

2   How do your answers in Question 1 relate to the ideological beliefs and values of the time—these may be dominant, oppositional or both. Remember that an absence of these can often be as significant as their being present.

3   Do you see any of the stereotypical female traits or tropes in either of the films you have watched? Explain and expand on the examples to show how these relate to the ideological beliefs and values of the time.

4   If you have watched a film produced more than 20 years ago, how do you see these tropes or traits in the light of contemporary ideological beliefs and values?

IDEOLOGICAL CONTEXTS: RACE AND THE OTHER

The ideological beliefs and values that have often shaped the attitude to gender have also shaped the attitude towards race and notions of 'the other'. The same writers, producers and directors who represent women in the ways mentioned earlier also see the constructed world as theirs. They see the world of their media narrative as 'real' and 'natural' and equivalent to the outside or exterior world, not only when it comes to portraying gender, but also when it comes to portraying outsiders or the other. These portrayals of other races and cultures are deeply rooted in the history of the nation in which the media narrative's creators live and are influenced by invasion, slavery and colonialism in the case of Australia, the USA and the United Kingdom.

Similar to gender, the ideological values of race and the other can be seen in the representations in the text. The protagonist is usually white and the narrative takes place in their world or through their eyes, and the viewer inhabits that world, which is generally male and Anglo-Celtic. Through the creation of this point of view that has whiteness and maleness at its centre, other races and cultures are pushed to one side and seen as the other.

Again, as with gender, this dominant social value of the primacy of 'Europeanness' can be seen in the stereotypes and tropes of characters in media narratives.

STEREOTYPES AND TROPES OF THE OTHER IN MEDIA NARRATIVES

These stereotypes or tropes of the other in media narratives tend to operate as a narrative shorthand where the stereotype stands for a host of other meanings. Just as with gender, these both reflect and reinforce a dominant ideological value.

The other as either victim or dangerous

A common stereotype by which groups such as Indigenous Australians and African-Americans have been portrayed is as helpless victims of crime or drugs. If they are in receipt of welfare payments, they will be portrayed as the 'deserving' poor or as 'ripping off' the system. The places where they live tend to be dark, despairing and dangerous—see, for example, films such as *Precious* (2009), *Boyz in the Hood* (1991) and *New Jack City* (1991).

The other side of this trope is the other as violent and dangerous, where audiences watch the victims and the city being terrorised by minority groups or racial gangs—or early American explorers who are at the mercy of violent Native Americans in such films as *The Revenant* (2015) (see Figure 6.5.9).

FIGURE 6.5.9 *The Revenant* (2015) portrays some groups of Native Americans as violent and dangerous, but others as 'noble'.

FIGURE 6.5.10 In early Australian film, Australian Aboriginals were often portrayed according to the trope of the mystical other, such as in *Walkabout* (1971).

The magical or mystical other

The magical or mystical other is a character from a minority group who uses their spirituality, customs or wisdom to help the white hero overcome their obstacles. These characters appear at a critical time in the narrative, asking for nothing for themselves. They are often portrayed as uneducated, old, poor or with a disability. Their only reason for being seems to be to help the white hero, even if it means sacrificing themselves. This is what happened in the film *Walkabout* (1971), when the David Gulpilil character dies after serving the children (see Figure 6.5.10).

Ariel Dorman is a Chilean academic and writer who argues that the function of the magical other works to validate the dominant ideological values of the society:

> The black character helps the white character, which demonstrates that [the former] feels this incredible interest in maintaining the existing society. Since there is no cultural interchange, the character is put there to give the illusion that there is cultural crossover to satisfy that need without actually addressing the issue. As a Chilean, however, I sense that maybe deep inside, mainstream Americans somehow expect those who come from the margins will save them emotionally and intellectually.

The white saviour

This trope shows a white character, usually the narrative's protagonist, appearing among an outsider or other society and imparting his (he is generally male) wisdom, expertise and/or technology to save the other. This is a common trope and can be read as an allegory for colonialism, particularly in films such as *Dances with Wolves* (1990), *The Last Samurai* (2003) and *Kong: Skull Island* (2017). Audiences also see another aspect of this in *Dangerous Minds* (1995), *The Help* (2011) and *Hidden Figures* (2016) (see Figure 6.5.11), where the white saviour gets the oppressed other to 'better' themselves, or the saviour smashes through a barrier to lead the other to a better place.

FIGURE 6.5.11 In *Hidden Figures* (2016), the 'white saviour' singlehandedly breaks down the barriers of exclusion where African-Americans could not enter mission control and had to use separate bathrooms. Neither of these incidents had any basis in fact.

The other as best friend

Like all of these tropes, there is a long history in literature of the other as companion, assistant or servant as in the cases of Robinson Crusoe and Friday, The Lone Ranger and Tonto and the white hunter on safari with his 'native' guide. Historically, this trope is also about colonialism and power over the other, but, in more recent times, this has tended to morph into the best friend trope. The 'other' best friend trope is a secondary character who is a friend and companion to the white protagonist—they are loyal and unquestioning, but sometimes sassy and truthful. They do not have lives of their own and we only see them with their white friend. Audiences can see this trope in films such as *That Awkward Moment* (2014), *Eat, Pray, Love* (2010) and *Monster in Law* (2005).

Another prominent other best friend is the gay best friend. In this case, they are invariably the gay male best friend to a heterosexual female. The gay best friend is loyal, sassy, truthful and has the ability to make his friend over to be beautiful, glamorous or popular. The gay best friend also has no life away from the protagonist. Audiences see this in films such as *Clueless* (1995) and *Mean Girls* (2004) and on television in *Sex in the City* and *Will and Grace.*

CULTURAL CONTEXTS

The cultural context can be seen together with other cultural discourses in what is known as the cultural field.

> The cultural field is a concept developed by Pierre Bourdieu, and claims that cultural products are affected by the way they are produced, where they are produced and how they came to be produced. The cultural field that cultural products are produced in is the product itself of a variety of contexts.

The place of a media narrative in the cultural field can be seen by placing or comparing one narrative to other ones that are being produced—generally at the same time. Media narrative can be seen as:

- part of a specific genre
- part of a sequence of films such as those featuring Batman or Superman
- the product of a particular director or creative team
- an expression of cultural events or norms (what is considered a 'good' film at the time)
- a product of or for particular social/cultural groups.

The cultural field can be seen by comparing one media narrative to another; for example, *Straight Outta Compton* (see Figure 6.5.12) and *Boyz in the Hood* (1991) (see Figure 6.5.13) were produced in the cultural context of inner-city America, while *Redfern Now* (see Figure 6.5.14) is in the cultural context of Aboriginal Australia in Sydney in the 2010s.

Learning activities

1 Find out what were considered 'outsider' groups in the society that produced your media narratives at the time of their production. Do the media narratives represent or take a position regarding these groups?

2 Are there characters who are not European/white in either of the media narratives you have watched? How do you think they are portrayed? Look carefully at their career or job, actions they may take and their relationships to others. How do these relate to the social values of the time – these may be dominant, oppositional or both. Remember that an absence of these can often be as significant as their presence.

3 Do you see any of the mentioned stereotypical traits or tropes in either of the films you have watched? Explain, expand on the examples and show how these relate to the social values of the time.

4 If you watched a film produced more than 30 years ago, how do you see these tropes or traits in the light of contemporary social values?

FIGURES 6.5.12, 6.5.13 AND 6.5.14 Scenes from *Straight Outta Compton* (2015) [top], *Boyz in the Hood* (1991) [middle] and *Redfern Now* [bottom]

INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXTS

The institutional context looks at how the media narrative was developed, funded and how it was expected to be distributed. All of these will affect and can be seen in the final work. A large number of media narratives are produced within the studio system. This started in Hollywood in the early years of film production and reached its peak in the 1950s. Under this system, the production of films was tightly controlled and the filmmaking process was, to a large extent, like a factory production line. The studios owned and controlled the process from employing the writers to owning the cinemas that screened the films. Regulatory bodies restricted the content of the films and the main purpose of film production was to make a profit.

The studios' influence and control has lessened since the 1960s, but they are still one of the big players in the institutional context.

FUNDING

Many media narratives are being produced as independent productions where the money for a specific project is raised from individual investors or via crowdfunding sites. The effect of this is to lift many of the constraints of the

FIGURE 6.5.15 In both *Wayne's World* (1992) and *Wayne's World 2* (1993) product placement is satirised. In this scene, Wayne endorses Calgon laundry detergent.

studios such as having to use particular actors or modify content to suit sponsors. One example of this is product placement. In product placement, the studio will send out proposals to companies to have their products featured in a film in return for money. For example, if a film's character drinks a soft drink, then the studio will contact soft drink companies and ask them to bid to get the character to drink their product. This also works in reverse where a soft drink company will contact a studio and ask that a character drink their product. The James Bond franchise raised a great deal of their production costs by selling advertising space in their films—except they do not call it advertising. This will have an obvious impact on the content of the media narrative.

Raising the funding for a media narrative from other sources such as private investors and particularly crowdfunding, allows more freedom of expression, however, these media narratives are still subject to oversight by regulatory bodies.

REGULATION

Regulatory bodies have been a large part of the institutional context in most countries that produce media narratives. These bodies set the boundaries and determine what is acceptable. In most countries, these bodies are controlled by the government and in some, by industry self-regulation. In the past, and in some places still, religious authorities have set the boundaries. In Australia, the regulatory body is the Australian Communications and Media Authority, which regulates film, literature and video games. Television is self–regulating via a code of conduct.

> The institutional context can also extend past the studio system to the influence of other institutional bodies—for example, a bank would be unlikely to fund a film that looked into corruption in the banking sector. In very religious countries, religious institutions may boycott a media narrative or pressure the government regulators to ban it.

FIGURE 6.5.16 *Top Gun* (1986) made the career of a US fighter pilot look glamorous. It was made with US air force cooperation and resulted in a 500 per cent increase in recruits.

Governments have attempted to influence or stop films whose content puts them, their policies or relationships in a bad light. One of the more powerful institutions in US filmmaking is the military. It is very expensive to shoot war scenes with all the equipment such as warplanes and tanks, and often the US military offers its services, however, this is not without strings attached. To obtain assistance, the producers have to submit five copies of the script, make whatever changes the military wants, film these exactly as approved and show officials before releasing the film. In *Reel Power: Hollywood Cinema and American Supremacy* (2010), Matthew Alford writes: 'Mainstream productions repeatedly endorse US force and do not criticise the fundamental assumptions of US benevolence …'

Learning activities

1 Are either or both of the media narratives you have studied considered to be part of a genre or a series? If so, how do you think this affected the work?

2 Look at other cultural products produced at the same time as your texts (ads, music videos and promos are good sources). Can you see any similarities or differences?

3 How were either or both of the media narratives you have studied been funded?

4 How do you think this may have influenced the content?

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- Media narratives are made to be consumed by audiences and audiences are not a blank slate. Audiences bring their own experiences and expectations when they interact with a media product. An audience's reception of a media narrative is also influenced by the viewing context, which can be both physical and ideological and changes over time.

- Media narratives are constructed from technical codes and narrative conventions. Technical codes are the production elements that make up the narrative such and lighting, camera lens and so on. A technical code can be seen and/or heard in a physical way in a narrative. We can see the effect of lighting or camera and hear the sound effect. A handy acronym for technical codes in film and television narratives is CAMELS: Camera, Acting, *Mise en scène*, Editing, Lighting and Sound.

- Narrative conventions are the elements that make up and shape the story and plot. Unlike technical codes, narrative conventions cannot be physically seen or heard—they have to be inferred or constructed by the audience. Technical codes and narrative conventions combine to create meaning. An example is the technical code of acting combines with the narrative convention of character to move the narrative forward.

- In traditional non-fictional moving image narratives, both technical and symbolic codes and narrative conventions are usually structured so as to appear invisible in order to keep up the illusion of the viewer watching reality, when in fact they are watching a constructed reality.

- In alternative non-fictional moving image narratives, the construction of the narrative is brought to the audience's attention to emphasise the constructed nature of the narrative with multiple points of view and multiple readings.

- All cultural products are produced within a variety of contexts, which influence their content, production and the consumption. It is worth noting that the contexts existing at the time influence the content and the production but we also consume a media narrative with contexts too. The contexts, including social values and ideologies, are as dynamic and changeable as the culture that produces them and our reception of a media narrative is always changing. At its most obvious, it may be that a film we loved when we were younger we may now see in a different light—we recognise that the contexts have changed and we no longer hold the same values.

ASSESSMENT TASKS

- With reference to both narrative conventions and technical codes, discuss how storylines are established and developed in both of the narrative texts that you have studied this year.

- Narratives can create a variety of responses in audiences. With respect to both narratives that you have studied this year, discuss how production codes and narrative combine to engage an audience.

- Using one or both of the texts you have studied, explain how ideologies shaped and are seen in the texts.

7 Media production

Media production is a complex and demanding process that requires extensive planning and organisation to ensure that the technical and aesthetic conventions of a media form are used in a manner that will engage your intended audience.

Whether you're interested in filmmaking, photography, magazines, animation or radio, this chapter will show you how you can create a polished and professional media production. You'll see how to manage this complex and often demanding process, and receive advice on the planning, organisation and production.

Your school-assessed task will consist of three parts:
- research portfolio and production exercises
- production design plan
- production.

Peter Jackson, director of *The Frighteners* (1996), *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy and *The Lovely Bones* (2009)

7.1 The production design plan

A production design plan is the blueprint for your media product. It includes all of your planning documents such as your treatment, screenplay, storyboards and shooting script, if you have decided to create a film product.

A GOOD PRODUCTION DESIGN PLAN

The most effective production design plans are those that effectively communicate your vision through a clear and detailed outline of the processes involved. Some schools choose A4 or A3 folios, others choose bound journals, while some will ask you to complete entirely digital design plans. When you are creating your design plan, it is important to remember not to waste time decorating it. This is a professional document intended to communicate your concept clearly to others. It should be written and organised in a way that is recognisable by industry professionals. Time decorating your design plan is better spent developing your idea, screenplay, storyboards, mock-ups or other planning documents.

The production design plan is a crucial planning document that you will use throughout the production and post-production process. The criteria for the school-assessed task can be found on the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) website. It's important to familiarise yourself with these assessment criteria because they can help guide you to make a more polished and professional product.

MEDIA PRODUCTION DEVELOPMENT

Before undertaking any production, media producers engage in a process of development, during which they explore ideas, experiment with equipment and research the form, style and genre of their production.

Ideas do not appear from nowhere. If you are having difficulty developing an idea for your media production, do not sit around and wait for inspiration to strike. Ideas are developed through a process of investigation and research. They develop by immersing yourself in the media. You need to watch, observe, scrutinise, annotate and think. Because creating a media product is a long and time-consuming process, settling on an idea that is achievable and will sustain your interest is crucial.

It is also important to ensure that your idea is feasible. In the planning stage of your production, you need to reflect carefully on the opportunities and challenges that might

occur throughout the process. Problems are much easier to resolve when you are experimenting with ideas in the planning stage. Not thinking carefully about anticipated difficulties can lead to much more significant problems during production and post-production.

BRAINSTORMING

In the early stages of your media production, it's important to document the development of your ideas. The process of developing an idea is called brainstorming. This is a word that most of us are familiar with, but few actually understand how to do it properly.

DEVELOPING IDEAS

Friends and family

Talking to your friends, family and teachers is a great way to develop ideas. The process of articulating your thoughts to other people means you start to clarify exactly what you'd like to make.

Newspapers and magazines

Flipping through a newspaper is often a terrific way to find an idea for a media production. Everyday newspapers are filled with human drama. It might be a crime or a human interest story that becomes the inspiration for a documentary or narrative film, or the reporting of a current, topical issue might form the focus for your magazine.

Books

If you are interested in narrative film, it is important to read regularly and widely. Reading fiction will give you a sense of storytelling, character, dialogue and narrative structure. Short stories are a particularly good source of ideas for short films. You can get a clear sense of the type of stories that can be told by reading short stories. If you base your film on a short story, you will need to get permission from the owner of the short story if you want to enter the film in film festivals or distribute it on the internet.

FIGURE 7.1.1 Excerpts from production design plans created by Top Screen selected students, Bridget Webster and Ben Head

Pick a genre, any genre …

Still looking for an idea? Take a look through this list of genres and formats to see if it sparks an idea: action, adventure, advertisement, alien invasion, animation, arthouse, B-movie, biopic, buddy cop, chick flick, claymation, comedy, coming of age, cooking show, crime, current affairs, dance film, detective film, documentary, drama, educational film, edutainment, espionage, experimental, fantasy, film noir, game show, ghost story, heist film, historical documentary, horror, infomercial, lifestyle show, melodrama, mockumentary, music video, musical, mystery, neo-noir, news, parody, period drama, political satire, post-apocalyptic, psychological drama, radio drama, reality television, romance, romantic comedy, satire, science fiction, sitcom, slapstick, soap opera, spoof, sport, spy, survival, suspense, techno-thriller, teen comedy, thriller, travel, vampire, western, zombie.

Five films and the ideas that inspired them

- Writer Richard Matheson came up with the idea for his novella *Duel*, which was later made into a film by Steven Spielberg, after he was forced off the road by a truck driver.
- Leigh Whannell and James Wan were inspired to make *Saw* (2004) by the final sequence of *Mad Max* (1979).
- Director Edgar Wright was inspired to make *Hot Fuzz* (2007) because, as a fan of action films, he was disappointed by the number of British entries to the genre. In the process of developing the screenplay, Wright and co-writer Simon Pegg watched 138 cop films.
- Filmmaker Clayton Jacobson put himself through film school by cleaning toilets, which is where he got the initial inspiration for the film *Kenny* (2006) (see Figure 7.1.2). After his brother Shane Jacobson did an impersonation of a toilet company employee, the idea started to take shape.
- Novelist and screenwriter Alex Garland developed the script for *28 Days Later* (2002) partly as a response to the way the British government was dealing with mad cow disease. He was also inspired by the work of George A Romero.

FIGURE 7.1.2 Shane Jacobson as Kenny in *Kenny* (2006)

Once you have developed an initial idea for your film, it is time to start refining the concept. Start to write down ideas for scenes, characters, shots, ideas, interview questions or page layouts. Unlike the brainstorming process where you are writing down a series of possibly unrelated ideas, developing the concept requires a deeper exploration of ideas. It is important to document these as they develop.

RESEARCH PORTFOLIO AND PRODUCTION EXERCISES

Once you have settled on an idea for your production, you will engage in a research task to explore aspects of the media form that you will work in. Throughout this process, you will develop a deeper understanding of narrative, genre, style and the codes and conventions that are relevant to your production.

The best research portfolios will be clear and purposeful. If you are making a horror film, for example, you might conduct a detailed analysis of how notable horror films use composition or sound to create a sense of unease. Similarly, if you are creating a documentary film, you might investigate and write about how documentarians tell a story using a combination of interviews and b-roll. This research portfolio is assessed as part of your production design plan. It is important to recognise that you should refer to this research portfolio throughout your production. When you are shooting or editing your film, for example, you might return to this research for guidance.

During the development phase of your media product, you will also complete at least two production exercises during which you develop an understanding of the skills, processes and equipment required to complete your production.

There are a number of ways you can approach your research portfolio and production exercises. Regardless of your starting point, you need to produce a detailed document that reflects extensive knowledge of your selected media form and genre.

Ideas for your research portfolio and production exercises can be found in the sections dedicated to each media form.

INTENTION

When writing your intention, think carefully about what you hope to achieve. Write about the purpose, impact and outcome of your media product. When you are writing a statement of intention, it is crucial that you explain what you are going to create clearly in the first sentence. A student creating a music magazine might write something like this:

> I am going to create a twelve-page alternative music magazine. This magazine will be an engaging and intelligent read for people who are passionate about the alternative music scene. It will enrich their understanding of the music and artists by including in-depth news, reviews and feature articles, which not only comment on this subculture but also give an insight into the creative process. This magazine is for people who love alternative music and will encourage them to delve deeper into this world, appreciating and enjoying the music and artists even more, providing fuel for their interest and passion in this area. Ultimately, this magazine does not aspire to introduce new people to alternative music, but rather to build support for artists and musicians by creating further passion and interest among their existing fans.

AUDIENCE

Audience is one of the most important considerations when planning a media product. Who are you making the media product for? What do they expect? What will they enjoy and find interesting? The knowledge, expectations and experience of your audience will inform every stage of the planning and production of your media product.

Understanding the audiences' knowledge of your subject matter is fundamental to forming a clear picture of who will be consuming your media product. Imagine you are creating a computing magazine. This is one example in which the audience's knowledge is crucial. Are you creating your magazine for users who struggle to upload photographs to their computer? Or are you creating a magazine for programmers? The moment you disregard what your audience already knows about your subject matter is the moment you lose their interest entirely.

When you are planning your media product, it is also important to understand audience expectations about its conventions, genre and style. Observing the technical and aesthetic conventions of your media form is crucial. Audiences will judge your media product by the same standards that they have for professional media productions. If you are creating an upmarket fashion magazine, readers of these publications have particular expectations about the use of typography and white space—disregarding these expectations means that you are disregarding your audience. When you consider this, every element of your production—from the weight of the typography and the width of margins, to the positioning of drop caps and photographs—becomes important. It is very similar with video production—audiences have highly developed expectations about the aesthetic and technical conventions of films. Poor use of headroom or the ineffective recording of dialogue—that is, not observing the technical conventions of this form—can reduce audience engagement with the text.

Audience expectations about genre are also important. If you are making a romantic comedy, for example, part of the audience engagement with these texts comes from their conventional narrative structure and the anticipation of a happy ending. Having a clear understanding of an audience's expectations also means that you can subvert what they expect to happen.

Defining your audience

When you are defining the audience for your media product, it is important to avoid generalisation. It is not helpful to write that your intended audience will be 'adults' or 'teenagers'. Simply referring to a particular age group does not tell you much about the people who will be engaging with your media product. You need to have a clear audience in mind. Imagine that you are creating a music magazine, which will focus on alternative music. You might write something like this: 'The audience for this magazine will be teenagers who are interested in music.'

When defining your audience, you need to be far more specific. Write about the attitudes, expectations and knowledge of the audience. A more detailed description of audience:

> The audience for this magazine will be people who are interested in the alternative music scene. They are the type of people who have their radios tuned to Triple J or RRR. They have an active and passionate interest in music and are always interested in discovering new acts. It is likely that they are not particularly interested in musicians who have achieved mainstream success or regularly have songs in the Top 40. They enjoy music that is more individual, expressive and may not appeal to a mass audience. Individuality and musical integrity are important to the audience. They are not only interested in listening to new alternative music, but they enjoy reading interviews with artists and bands, which gives them a greater insight into the creative process. When choosing a music magazine, they will have certain expectations about its content. It must be fresh, detailed, and insightful and have a great deal of integrity. It will be well-written and not feature shallow puff pieces. They enjoy reading serious music journalism. The audience for this magazine will have a very detailed understanding of alternative music already and will seek out magazines that enrich their understanding of music and its associated subcultures.

7.2 Film

If you are creating a film or video product, it must be less than ten minutes in duration. The production design plan will address the codes and conventions, formats and processes appropriate to your intention, audience and media form.

THE PRODUCTION DESIGN PLAN

The production design plan may include:

- brainstorming
- research folio
- production exercises
- intention
- audience
- treatment
- screenplay
- storyboards
- shot list
- scheduling documents
- codes and conventions and specifications appropriate to your genre and/or media form, such as location, camera techniques, techniques of engagement, edit details, lighting and music and sound effects
- production notes.

RESEARCH PORTFOLIO

Once you have settled on an idea, you will need to complete your research portfolio. Your research portfolio will examine codes, conventions, narrative, genres and styles relevant to your production, making specific and detailed reference to how these techniques will be used. Here are some ideas that you might use as starting points:

- Research how camera techniques, acting, *mise en scène*, editing, lighting and/or sound are used in the genre or style of filmmaking you have selected. When writing about the use of particular codes, illustrate your discussion with stills from relevant films and explain how you will use these techniques in your production.
- Study notable examples from the genre or style of film you have selected. Genre is an important consideration when making any media product, particularly short films. The audience will have particular expectations about the narrative, characters and style of your film based on its genre. If you do not fulfil these genre conventions, the audience may feel cheated. At the

same time, it is necessary to make your film feel fresh and unexpected. Explain how you will use these genre conventions in the planning and production of your own film.

- Analyse the typical narrative structure of your selected genre, showing an understanding of conventional structure with reference to significant films. Comment on the opening, development and resolution of the narrative. How will you use these typical story structures in your production?
- Undertake a character study explaining how characters are established and developed in films of your selected genre. Explain how characters are developing using a range of cinematic techniques. Likewise, comment on the character arc they undergo during the film.
- Investigate and analyse the style of notable directors from your selected style or genre. Comment on the technical and aesthetic qualities of their films and explain how you will utilise such techniques in your own filmmaking.
- Study notable examples of audience engagement in similar films. This might include how suspense is developed through the use of cinematic techniques or how the audience responds to aspects of the story, such as character development or narrative resolution.

PRODUCTION EXERCISES

Following your research portfolio, you will undertake at least two production exercises to explore the technology, equipment and processes relevant to your media form. Each of these exercises will be accompanied by documentation including an intention and evaluation. The best production exercises will be related to your research and proposed production, giving you the opportunity to explore the equipment and processes necessary for completing your project.

- Camera: Storyboard and film a short sequence that allows you to develop a greater understanding of the camera required for your production. The exercise should allow you to explore the camera's capabilities, such as lenses, focus and manual settings.

- Camera movement: If your film requires specific types of camera movement, the production exercises are an opportunity to explore how you will achieve these during your production. Such exercises might involve experimentation with tripods, sliders, dollies, cranes and drones.

- Lighting: Explore different lighting set-ups. This might involve using a three-point lighting set-up for a simple scene or bouncing fill light onto characters using reflectors. If you are making a horror film, for example, you might explore how to film low-light sequences.

- Sound: Shoot a simple scene that involves recording dialogue and sound to explore the capabilities of the microphones you are using. Develop an understanding of how to edit and mix these sounds into your final sequence.

- Editing: Using the footage shot for your first exercise, you might learn and explore the capabilities of your editing software, such as assembling footage, colour correcting, colour grading and mixing sound.

- Music: Given the difficulty of securing clearance for copyrighted music, you might explore the potential of software like GarageBand and FL Studio to create music for your production.

- Software: Production exercises are an opportunity to explore the software you will require to edit.

- Dialogue: Short films often require dialogue scenes. Shooting and editing a dialogue scene will enable you to develop a better understanding of microphone positioning, sound editing and mixing.

- Special effects: If your film involves particular special effects, you might use software such as Adobe After Effects to explore the feasibility of achieving these results in your final film.

PRE-PRODUCTION

TREATMENT

A treatment is the first stage of developing a script for your video production. It is typically several pages long and describes what happens in your film from beginning to end. Check out the description of how to write a screenplay earlier in the book.

SCREENPLAY

A screenplay is the written planning document for your film. Check out how to write a screenplay earlier in the book.

STORYBOARDS
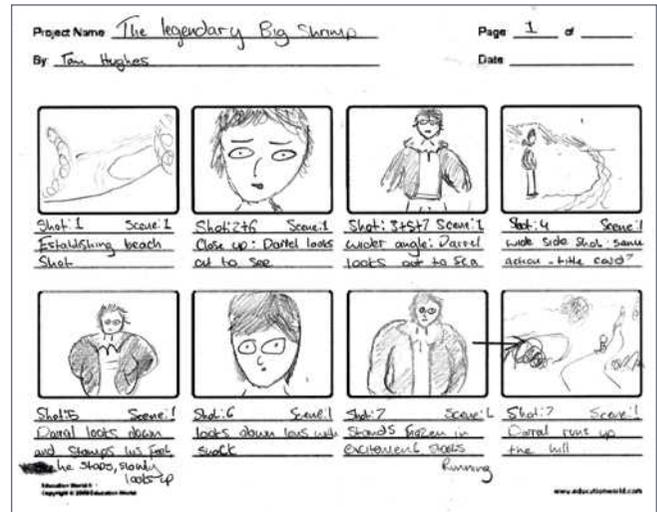
FIGURE 7.2.1 A sample of a storyboard

During pre-production, it is important to storyboard every shot in the film. Storyboards will save you time during both principal photography and post-production. Although first-time filmmakers often feel daunted by storyboarding, it's possible to create clear, expressive storyboards with little more than a pencil, paper and some perseverance. Your storyboards should clearly convey your intended use of camera movement, shot size, *mise en scène* and lighting.

How you storyboard depends on your preferences and artistic ability. Some filmmakers find it easiest to envisage shots simply using a pencil and paper. Storyboards don't have to be amazing works of art. They simply need to convey a clear sense of composition, movement and expression. Even very basic illustrations can convey the blocking and composition of a shot, as seen in Figure 7.2.1.

Storyboards should convey a clear sense of composition. Filmmakers often use the rule of thirds to create aesthetically pleasing composition. If you divide the frame into thirds, the points of interest should be positioned along these lines or at their intersections.

Your storyboards should show an appropriate use and progression of shot size. A typical scene will usually progress from an extreme long shot to close-ups. When storyboarding your film, think about how shot size and the sequence of shots contributes to the narrative.

Director Ridley Scott is renowned for the small, thumbnail sketches, dubbed 'Ridleygrams', that he uses to convey the visual composition of his films. During the pre-production for *Alien* (1979), 20th Century Fox were so impressed with the detail of his storyboarding that they doubled the film's budget to US$8.4 million.

Although not everyone can draw, most people have access to a digital camera. One of the best ways to pre-visualise your film is by using a series of digital photographs. Because creating storyboards with a digital camera requires that you visit the actual location, it is a great way to block out a scene, giving you the opportunity to think carefully about the positioning of actors and props within the frame and allowing you to solve problems before you embark on principal photography. Given that many students choose to shoot on DSLR and mirrorless cameras, this is a terrific way to give you a sense of how you can position actors and props within a location. The other advantage of taking photographs using a camera that you are going to shoot the film on is that it encourages you to think about lens choice.

FIGURE 7.2.2 A scene from *Heat* (1995)

Director Michael Mann (*Collateral* (2004), *Miami Vice* (2006)) used an SLR camera to pre-visualise the climactic sequence of the film *Heat* (1995). The film involved an armed chase along a busy Los Angeles street. In order to ensure that they filmed the scene as efficiently as possible the director shot the sequence as a series of photographs during pre-production.

Pre-visualising your film with a smartphone is a quick way to think about composition and the sequence of shots. You don't need a storyboarding application, just a photo app that allows you to organise photographs into albums. The advantage of this approach is that it is quick and gives you the freedom and flexibility to develop ideas that occur spontaneously.

ANIMATICS

Creating an animatic is another good strategy for pre-visualising your film. While storyboards are effective ways for thinking about the composition and blocking of shots, they do not give an accurate sense of the rhythm and pacing of your editing. An animatic is a rough edit of your storyboards. This is a useful exercise because it allows you to see how your story will unfold. Completing an animatic allows you to think more carefully about editing, sound effects and music and to gauge the emotional tenor of scenes before you shoot them.

SHOT LIST

A shot list is one of the most useful things that you can have on a film set. A shot list typically has the following columns: scene number, shot number, duration, shot size, location and description. When you are shooting your film, it is a great idea to have a copy of your shot list on a clipboard so you can cross each shot off after it is completed. This avoids frustrating and time-consuming reshoots to pick up material you missed the first time around.

LOCATION SCOUTING

Location scouting is an important stage in the filmmaking process. It is important to choose locations that are accessible and available for filming. There are certain locations—such as train stations—that are not public spaces and will require permission. If you want to film in a location such as a cafe or store, you will require permission from the owners to do so. The best approach is to contact them in writing, giving them a detailed overview of the project and how long you will be on the location.

CASTING

When you are thinking about ideas for your film, base the narrative around the actors that you have access to. Casting age-appropriate actors is important. If you are planning to shoot a crime drama, it is not going to look terribly convincing if you cast a seventeen year old as a police detective. It is usually possible to convince older people such as parents or members of your extended family to take on these types of roles. If you do not have access to older actors, do not write a script that requires them. It is also a good idea to keep the number of cast members to a minimum. Every time you add another character, you are making your film more complex to shoot.

REHEARSAL

Creating a low-budget film often means that you are relying on the generosity of actors and crew, which means that a smooth, well-organised shoot becomes especially important. Giving your actors adequate time to rehearse is crucial. Make sure that they receive copies of the script several weeks in advance so that they have time to read over their lines and think about delivery. If you spend a few hours the week before principal photography running through the lines with your actors, it will make the shoot quicker and more efficient.

A SHOOTING SCHEDULE

Creating a shooting schedule is one way to ensure that you have adequate time to make your film. A shooting schedule will typically include the date of filming, location, actors, as well as the props and equipment required for filming. Once you have created a shooting schedule, it can be used like a checklist to ensure that you have everything necessary for the shoot. There's nothing worse than arriving on the location only to discover that you've left the batteries for your camera behind! Sometimes, despite careful planning, it is necessary to go back and pick up extra shots. Plan for this contingency. Aim to have the film completed at least a week before the deadline to receive feedback and make further changes.

PRINCIPAL PHOTOGRAPHY

If you've carefully planned your film during pre-production, you should be able to confidently shoot your film and easily deal with any problems that arise.

TIPS FOR DIRECTING

- The day before your shoot, review the storyboards and visit the location to block out the scene.
- Arrive early to the set and ensure that you have all of your equipment; being organised is a great way to inspire confidence in your actors.
- Give clear instructions; be polite, patient and assertive.
- Be specific about where you want actors to stand, how you want them to move and what you want them to say.
- Check the lighting, sound and framing of the shot before rolling.
- Encourage the actors to wait a few seconds after you call 'action' before they start to perform; this will give you a little more space when editing a scene together.
- Encourage your actors to keep performing until you say 'cut'.
- Do not finish shooting a scene until you've picked up cut-ins and cut-aways.

SHOOTING DIALOGUE

Dialogue is often filmed using a 'shot reverse shot' set-up. This involves framing the actors individually and shooting their lines out of sequence. For example, you set up the camera and shoot all of the first actor's lines. Then change the position of the camera and shoot the second actor's lines. Shooting dialogue in this manner is useful when you're dealing with inexperienced actors who may not be able to remember whole pages of dialogue. Remember that the actor should be looking in the direction of the person they are talking to so their eyelines match when you edit the shots together. Always capture about thirty seconds of the actor listening to the other person talk; this means that, if there is a problem with the other shot, you can cut away to the shot of the other actor listening.

Always shoot a master shot. This is a wide shot that shows all of the actors standing in the frame. This will give you greater control when you're editing.

THE 180-DEGREE RULE

If you start filming a conversation on one side of your actors, stay on that side. Crossing the imaginary 180-degree line will make it appear as if your actors are looking in the wrong direction and their eyelines won't match.
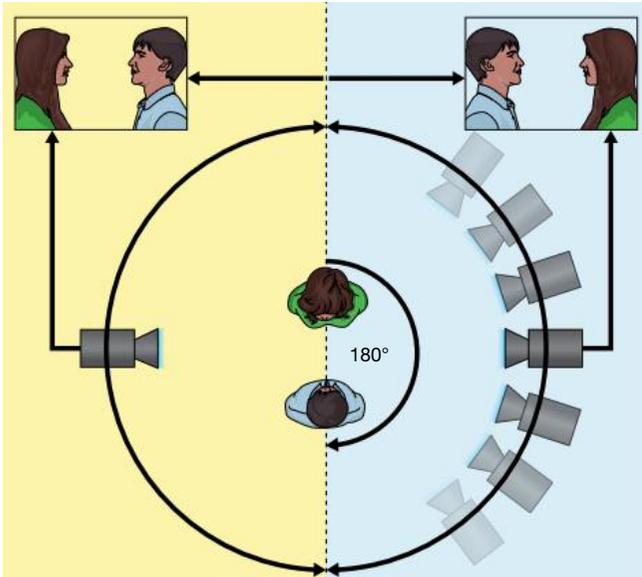
FIGURE 7.2.3 The imaginary line connecting the two actors and the 180-degree arc on which cameras may be positioned to get the corresponding left/right shot relationships

THE 30-DEGREE RULE

If you want to edit two shots together, they must be filmed from sufficiently different angles. It is very difficult to edit shots that are less than 30 degrees apart without the edit becoming conspicuous and jarring.

MATCH ON ACTION

One of the most impressive and seamless editing techniques is the match on action. This is achieved when you film something from two different shot sizes or angles and cut them together at the moment the actor performs a particular action. Because the audience is used to this particular technique, it appears almost seamless. Achieving a match on action in post-production requires precise direction during principal photography. The actor needs to replicate the action precisely so that it can be filmed from two different angles. Before filming shots that are going to be used for a match on action, rehearse a few times. When you edit the results together, the cut should appear seamless.

LIGHTING

Poor lighting in your film is something that an audience will not forgive. Like ineffective handheld camera movement and poor sound, inadequate lighting will make your production look amateurish. Many consumer-level cameras are incapable of shooting good footage in low-light conditions. Shooting in low light will often result in digital video grain, which degrades the quality of your image.

OUTDOOR LIGHTING

If you are shooting in sunlight consider using reflector boards to soften the shadows on your subject's face. Having someone stand off camera with a large piece of white cardboard is one of the simplest ways of achieving this. Large reflective sunshades used to keep the heat out of cars are also a cheap way of creating fill light for a shot. Large sheets of polystyrene are also useful for this purpose.

Overcast days usually provide the best lighting for outdoor scenes because the cloud cover diffuses the light. When you are shooting outside, be aware that patchy cloud cover can cause frequent changes in lighting conditions. It may not be possible to edit two shots together if one is filmed in direct sunlight and the other is not.

INDOOR LIGHTING

When you are making a low-budget film, indoor lighting gives you greater control over the lighting of a scene. If you are shooting indoors during the day, make use of available light from windows. Daylight is your best source of lighting. Pointing the camera away from windows is the best way to avoid troublesome backlighting and ensure that your characters are adequately lit. If the window has curtains, you may be able to use these to diffuse strong sunlight. When you are shooting indoors, always turn on the overhead lights. Lamps can be positioned around your actors to create fill light and further illumination. If lamp light is too bright it can be diffused by pointing it towards the ceiling or wall.

SHOOTING AT NIGHT

Although film and television programs might look like they are shot at night, they are often shot during the daytime and the footage is adjusted in post-production to give the illusion of night-time. To achieve this, the filmmakers will often give the footage a blue tone, which conveys the impression of moonlight to the audience. If you have a scene at night, it might be a good idea to shoot it on an overcast day—which will help avoid telltale shadows—and darken the footage in post-production.

WHITE BALANCE

Before you start rolling, you have to make sure that the white balance on your video camera is set correctly. The best way to ensure this is to manually set it for every shot. This usually involves putting a white piece of cardboard directly in front of the camera and activating the manual white balance. The image will be adjusted for the available light. Incorrectly set white balance can cause the image to be too orange or too blue. If you are unsure how to manually set the white balance on your camera, check the manual.

SOUND

First time filmmakers often overlook the importance of sound. Before you start filming, listen to the location and do your best to eliminate any background noises. Turn off air-conditioners and close windows to reduce the noise of traffic. The human ear is extremely effective at filtering out this sort of background noise. The microphones on most consumer video cameras are not as discerning, picking up everything in the background. Even if you are using a camera-mounted shotgun microphone, attempt to get it as close to the actors as you can. It is possible to increase the level of dialogue in post-production; however, when you boost the levels on an audio track you are boosting everything including any background noise.

CHOOSING SOUND EQUIPMENT

The available equipment will determine how you record sound. Expensive equipment does not guarantee a well-recorded soundtrack. It is important to understand the strengths and weaknesses of different microphones and equipment so you can use them effectively when you are out on location.

- Onboard microphone: A camera's onboard microphone is often capable of capturing clear audio. Always get the microphone as close to your actors as possible. With an onboard microphone, this often involves keeping your lens wide.

- Shotgun microphone: A shotgun is typically a condenser microphone. It is a highly directional microphone that is favoured on film sets because it allows the sound operator to target who is speaking. Although shotgun microphones can often be mounted on top of a camera, it is desirable to get it as close to your actors as possible. If you are shooting a medium shot, for example, the shotgun microphone can be held slightly out of frame by your sound operator or mounted on a tripod.

- Lapel or *lavalier* microphone: This is a small condenser microphone that can be clipped to an actor's lapel, which is often used in documentary and news reporting. In narrative films, where it is undesirable to see a microphone in shot, the lapel microphone can be used in long shots if they can be obscured beneath an actor's shirt. Keep in mind that these microphones are particularly susceptible to the movement of actors and their clothing.

- Tripod: Spare tripods can be used to position microphones directly out of shot.

- Boom pole: Shotgun microphones should ideally be positioned above an actor angled towards their throat. This will capture both the sibilant sounds coming from the actor's mouth and the deeper sounds that come from their chest. Operating a boom pole successfully is something that requires skill, not only to position the microphone correctly, but also to reduce handling noise.

- Shock mount: A shock mount is a rubber mount for a microphone that prevents handling noise travelling into the microphone. Shock mounts are handy but not strictly necessary since a skilled sound operator will always be able to reduce handling noise.

- Dead cat: When you are shooting outdoors, a 'dead cat' or 'foam sock' will reduce the muffled sound created when wind hits the microphone's diaphragm.

- Pistol grip: A handheld microphone holder or mount.

- Headphones: Headphones are the most important part of a sound kit. Monitoring sound as it's being recorded on location means you are able to deal with any sound issues as they occur.

If your scene requires that a television or radio be on in the background, add these sounds during post-production. Recording dialogue over such noises is difficult and causes countless continuity headaches when you are editing the film.

If you are shooting outside, be aware that wind can play havoc with your audio, creating a low rumbling sound, which will ruin dialogue. If you are using an external microphone, consider using a dead cat over the microphone to reduce wind noise. Think about how you can position the actors and block out a scene, using buildings and other structures to shield the camera so you're not standing directly in the path of the wind.

It is very important to listen to the sound that you are recording through a pair of headphones that are connected to your video camera or audio recorder. This will allow you to pick up on problems with the sound as you're shooting. If there is a sudden noise that interferes with a line of dialogue, try doing another take because noises like these are very difficult to edit out in post-production. For this reason, it is advisable to have a dedicated sound operator. This will allow you to focus on composing shots and directing the actors.

POST-PRODUCTION

EDITING

Even basic video-editing software, like iMovie and Windows Movie Maker™, gives you the tools to create a sophisticated film. Observe the following advice when editing:

- Most video-editing programs offer a range of transitions and effects. It is best to avoid these. Most of the time, you will simply be performing a basic cut from one shot to another.

- Used to convey the passing of time, the fade should be used sparingly.

- Establishing shots are an important part of narrative filmmaking. They are part of the glue that holds a narrative together. They can also be effective in conveying the passing of time. For example, if you want to bridge the gap between a scene that happens during the day and one that happens at night, it is as simple as cutting from the first scene to a shot of the sun setting over the house, then to the first shot of your night-time scene.

- Use a match on action to create a seamless cut between two shots. For example, you might have a mid-shot of your character pouring a glass of orange juice. Cutting to an extreme close-up of the glass at the precise moment the orange juice hits the bottom of the glass in both shots will make it appear seamless.

- Observe the 30-degree rule. If two shots are not sufficiently different you will not be able to cut from one to another without creating a jump cut, which the audience will potentially find obtrusive and jarring.

SOUND EFFECTS

Sound is an aspect of student productions that is often overlooked. In professional films, sounds are often replaced using sound effects from production libraries or specifically recorded foley sounds. Even on a low-budget production, it is possible to add significant polish to a film by doing the same. This is also a useful way to remove the microphone hum or any noise on location, such as that created by refrigerators or air-conditioners.

SCORING

There are several different approaches to scoring that you can take. One approach is to write leitmotifs, which are short sequences of music that are associated with a character or situation. The most famous examples of this include the shark in *Jaws* (1975) and Darth Vader in *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980). Another approach to scoring is simply to create music that provides a particular mood. For example, if you are making a horror film, you might simply create an ominous soundscape to inspire a feeling of dread in the audience.

When using software like GarageBand be aware that the loops used in these programs are easily recognisable and can sound clichéd. If you're not musically inclined, enlist the help of people who are.

The internet is another good source of soundtrack music. Often unsigned bands and artists are willing to allow filmmakers to use music in their movies. There are many sites on the internet, such as SoundCloud™, that allow you to find unsigned artists and bands. While music from royalty-free production libraries can sound very polished, you must be willing to pay for the privilege of using it in your films. If your film is going to be sold outside the classroom or sold for profit, permission must be obtained from the copyright holder of any music. This can be a long and expensive process, so think carefully about including such music before you do so.

Quiet by Ben Head

Quiet is an ambitious and dramatic war film created by VCE Media student Ben Head, which is based loosely on the real-life experience of his grandfather Sergeant Bill Woodcock who served in the Suffolk Regiment during the Second World War.

The inspiration for the film came from the stories he heard about his grandfather while he was growing up. 'I had never met my grandfather,' says Ben, 'but his ability as a young man to join the army and fight for king, country and peace inspired me, especially as he was my age at the time'.

FIGURES 7.2.4 AND 7.2.5 Ben Head's *Quiet* is a visually stunning and emotionally visceral short film set during the Second World War.

(Printed with the demonstration version of Fade In)   2.

Text: In honour of the past servicemen of the Suffolk
Regiment. To my grandad, Sergeant Bill Woodcock.
1st Suffolk Regiment

'The big obstacle in the path of an advance towards La
Ferte Mace was the Andaine Forest. Reports had it that
these woods were thick with enemy.'

*The film starts suddenly with an intense drum roll and a
medium shot of dense pine trees. (Drum music continues)*

Text: France, August 1944.

**Camera pans* to the left to eventually show 4 British
soldiers in a foxhole, some with their weapons aimed
outwards, others relaxing with helmets off. Close up shots
reveal dirty faces and uniforms, but wary men. Some men
smoke. 3 riflemen and a Sergeant. Their position is merely a
hastily dug pit, camouflaged with pine branches.*

*A close shot reveals the sergeant staring over the top
butts cig at the forest ahead (eyes twitching), and an
over the shoulder shot. He then shrinks down below the
parapet and lies against the wall. He pulls out a map.*

Bill:

Truth is mate I have no idea where we are.

Jimmy:

That bloody artillery shredded the
platoon up good. Any chance others are
trying to regroup like us?

Bill:

I doubt it. Both trucks were hit by shells.
Was just pot luck we were out taking a piss.

Jimmy:

So we are the buffer between the whole
bleedin' German army and our rear echelon
boys. *Laughs* There're gonna fookin'
smash us up for sure.

Bill nods, eyes nervously twitching,
looking at his watch.

Bill:

Alright, I want you with eyes front, it's
all round defence until the others catch up
with us. I want minimal chatter and stay wary.

A shot looks up at the forest and the sky, then rotates
downwards to see the eerie dense woods yet again. The woods
are quiet. As one man keeps an eye out, the other three relax.

Henry:

It's quiet.
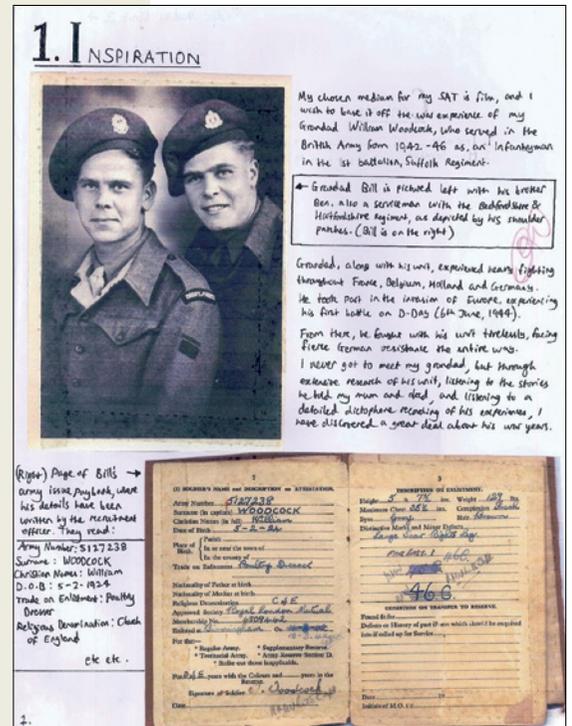
FIGURES 7.2.6 AND 7.2.7 A detailed
investigation of Ben's grandfather's
experience during the Second World
War led to the development of the
screenplay for *Quiet*.

Ben was also inspired to make the film because of a keen interest in war films and a love of history.

'I fit in the storyline for the film alongside my grandfather's regimental history, and what it accomplished in the war,' he said. To achieve a sense of authenticity, Ben researched the locations and times of battles that his grandfather's battalion fought in.

The script developed organically over a period of weeks as Ben and his father experimented with dialogue and improvised British accents:

> Eventually, I sat down at the kitchen bench and wrote for about an hour straight, and at the end of the time I had an eight-page script for the film. I revisited the draft several times in the lead up to preparing our folios in media, adding small pieces here and there, arming myself with a copy of my grandfather's regimental history to make sure everything was authentic.

Ben had initially planned a far more ambitious battle scene. Acknowledging the difficulty this would pose, he simplified the idea to focus on three British soldiers hunkered down in a trench, ending up with a total cast of twelve people. 'I realised that the audience would be closer to a smaller group of protagonists,' he said, 'especially if I could fit all three of them in the frame at once.'

During pre-production, Ben maintains that you don't need artistic ability to draw effective storyboards. 'The aim of a storyboard is to outline the rough construction of a frame, and stick figures can allow enough of an idea to reconstruct what has been put on paper and convert it to the screen.'

Costumes were an integral part of achieving his vision. Fortunately, Ben is a member of a military performing arts and re-enactment group. 'I had many friends at my disposal who owned vast collections of period authentic uniforms, equipment and weaponry, as well as myself,' he said. 'Luckily for me, all I had to do was contact my actors—most were re-enactors but some were school friends—and ask for them to bring their gear and themselves to the film set.'

Quiet was shot on a Sony a7S™ that he borrowed from a friend. During principal photography, Ben emphasises the importance of good organisation.

> On the day, I was lucky to have thoroughly laid out the shooting plan for the day, taking into account lunch breaks and when it started to get dark. Once aspects like these were taken into account, including possible extraneous variables that could impact upon the success of the shooting, I was able to direct and act with relative ease.

Ben's father is a retired member of the Australian army who works as a small arms instructor and safety advisor. He acted as an armourer on the set to ensure that appropriate measures were taken to ensure the safety of those involved.

> In relation to firearms, particularly blank firing, people often underestimate the serious nature of their use on a film set. I would highly recommend only employing firearms if you can have a capable and qualified safety officer and armourer present. Emergency services notifications in relation to use of firearms is also critical.

During post-production, Ben spent hours editing, colour correcting and mixing the sound. He encourages VCE Media students to pursue original music because obtaining permission to use copyright music can often be problematic. He also emphasises the importance of 'spotting' music—the process of carefully considering where music will be used and what impact it will have on the audience. 'Musical scores also need to be used tactically to suit the mood of what is being presented to the audience,' he said.

> During the course of planning *Quiet*, I was advised that I was perhaps biting off more than I could chew in terms of the scale of the production. I knew, however, that because I had been developing and thinking about the concept of my film for so long, I would be able to pull it off. Don't be put off!

7.3 Documentary film

Students creating a documentary are required to make a film or video that is less than ten minutes in duration. The production design plan will address codes and conventions, formats and processes appropriate to your intention, audience and media form.

THE PRODUCTION DESIGN PLAN

The production design plan may include:

- brainstorming
- research folio
- production exercises
- intention
- audience
- interview questions
- script
- pre-interview
- storyboards
- shot list
- scheduling documents
- codes and conventions and specifications appropriate to your genre and/or media form, such as location, camera techniques, techniques of engagement, edit details, lighting, music and sound effects
- production notes.

RESEARCH PORTFOLIO

Once you have settled on an idea, you will need to complete your research portfolio. Your research portfolio will examine codes, conventions, narrative, genres and styles relevant to your production, making specific and detailed reference to how these techniques will be used in your documentary. Here are ideas that you might use as starting points for your research.

- Select documentaries that have a similar style to the production you are undertaking. Make a note of how the documentaries use camera techniques, *mise en scène*, editing, lighting and sound.
- Consider the narrative structure of notable documentaries. How does the story open, develop and resolve?
- Study several interviews from the style of documentary you aspire to make, noting how they frame, light and conduct the interview.
- Study how similar documentaries use b-roll, noting how these shots are composed and contribute to the ideas and issues being explored in the documentary.
- Study how similar documentaries use photographs, archival footage, re-enactments and other material to create visual interest and contribute to the story.
- Analyse the most engaging moments in similar documentaries and explain how you will use this knowledge to engage your audience.
- Analyse the editing of a scene in a notable documentary, commenting on its use of editing, transitions and sound. Make note of the techniques you will utilise in your own documentary.

PRODUCTION EXERCISES

Following your research portfolio, you will undertake at least two production exercises to explore the technology, equipment and processes relevant to your media form. Each of these exercises will be accompanied by documentation including an intention and evaluation. The best production exercises will be related to your research and proposed production, giving you the opportunity to explore the equipment and processes necessary for completing your project.

- Interview: Conduct an interview with someone to learn more about framing, recording sound and lighting interviews. After the interview, you can develop an understanding of how best to frame and shoot b-roll footage to edit together with this.
- Sound: Explore the capabilities of available microphones, which could include your camera's onboard microphone, shotgun microphones or lapel microphones.
- Editing: Develop a better understanding of the post-production workflow for your documentary by editing, cleaning up audio and mixing the sound for an interview that you have shot.

- Lower third: Documentaries often incorporate lower third titles to indicate the name and occupation of interview subjects. Use the production exercise as an opportunity to explore how your editing software or motion graphics programs like Adobe After Effects™ can be used to design and animate these titles.

PRE-PRODUCTION

The key difference between planning an interview-based documentary and planning a narrative film is that you cannot be precisely sure what your interview subject is going to say in response to your questions. Your written planning document, therefore, should consist of a script for your narration and the questions you plan to ask your subject. Although you cannot be certain what they are going to say, it is still possible to anticipate their answers, particularly if you have already read other interviews or done sufficient research on the subject.

Although the element of interviewee response will remain in doubt until you are in the editing suite, it is still possible to visualise your film. You should have a clear sense of how your interview subject is going to be framed and the type of photographs and footage you are going to cut away to during the interview.

When you are planning a documentary film, research is critically important. You need to find out as much as you can about the interview subject so you can write your narration, devise thoughtful questions, source photographs and obtain other appropriate video footage that you would like to use in the final cut.

WRITING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Before you interview someone, make sure you conduct adequate research on the person. It is usually possible to discover the basic facts about a person or topic beforehand. Already knowing the basics means that you can focus on asking thoughtful questions and receiving meaningful answers, rather than just checking the simple facts.

Closed-ended questions are questions that invite a single word or short answers. Examples of closed-ended questions include:

- How old are you?
- What year did you meet your wife?
- What type of car do you drive?
- Where do you live?

For the purposes of an interesting and engaging documentary, you want your interview subject to give more substantial responses. Open-ended questions are designed to provoke detailed responses. The following opening phrases elicit open-ended questions and can lead to lengthy answers:

- Tell me about …
- What do you think about …?
- Why do you believe …?
- How do you feel about …?

ORGANISING AN INTERVIEW

There are different ways that you can arrange an interview. Sending an email is a great way to make initial contact with an interview subject, but it is good practice to follow up with a telephone call to introduce yourself 'in person'. Make sure you explain the purpose of your interview and how their information will be used.

You should also explain that you are making a documentary film, which most likely means that you will need to film the interview. Some people can feel nervous or self-conscious about being in front of a camera; it is important to be reassuring and to try and make your interview subject feel as comfortable as possible with the idea of being filmed.

Remember, the interviewee is doing you a favour by setting aside time to speak to you. When trying to organise a time to interview someone in person, it may be a good idea to approach or call them towards the end of the day or during their quietest time. It is usually not recommended to visit someone without giving sufficient notice. When arranging a time for the filming, make sure you ask for and set up a time that is convenient for you and your interview subject.

CONDUCTING A PRE-INTERVIEW

Conducting a pre-interview is one way to develop a better understanding of the subjects of your documentary. Going into the production of a documentary with interview questions alone means that you are often unsure about the responses that your subject will give. Conducting a pre-interview is an effective way to reduce this doubt and give you a clearer understanding of how your documentary will come together. To conduct a pre-interview, all you need is some kind of audio recorder or even just a smart phone. Going through this process is also a good way to reduce any anxiety your subject might have regarding the interview itself, it also helps the subject think more deeply about the questions that you are going to ask them.

Once the pre-interview is complete, you can transcribe the audio and incorporate this into your planning document and storyboards. Visiting the subject for a pre-interview is also a good opportunity to come up with ideas for b-roll footage and take photographs that can be incorporated into your storyboards.

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

Make sure you know the way to your interview destination. Turning up late to an appointment that you have requested is not a good start to the interview! Leave early as it is better to have time to spare than be struggling to make it on time. Not only does arriving late create a bad impression, it also sends a message to your interview subject that you do not value their time, which they have generously agreed to give you.

If you are meeting the interviewee face-to-face for the first time, it is important to try and develop a friendly rapport with them. Be sure to thank your subject for agreeing to be interviewed and for taking the time to speak to you. Make conversation or general 'small talk' to begin with to put them at ease. A lot of people can feel intimidated by the idea of being interviewed, particularly if they have never been in front of a camera before. If your interviewee is relaxed, then you are probably going to get detailed responses from them, which will result in a better interview.

Think about your *mise en scène* carefully. When you conduct an interview with someone, it will usually take place at their home or workplace. Do not be afraid to suggest locations for shooting. Try to find somewhere where something interesting will appear in the background or look for an aesthetically pleasing way to compose the shot.

When you are setting up for the interview, ensure the shot is lit correctly and that you are able to record dialogue effectively.

DURING THE INTERVIEW

Before the interview begins, ask the interview subject to state their name and spell it on camera. This will be useful in post-production when you need to create lower third titles.

If you have ever watched interviews on television current affairs, you will have noticed that the interviewer often interrupts or cuts off the person being interviewed. While this can lead to fiery and controversial interviews that make for entertaining prime-time viewing, it is not the best way to conduct an interview for a documentary. The interview subject should be given time to answer questions in detail. Also, if you speak over or interrupt them, you are going to be faced with countless problems in the editing suite.

During everyday conversations, people often provide verbal feedback as they listen to another person speak. It is common for the listener to pepper the conversation with verbal cues, such as 'uh-huh', 'yeah', 'right', to let the speaker know they are being listened to. When you are interviewing someone for a film documentary, it is important to avoid this social nicety. If you want to let someone know that you are listening, make eye contact, nod and smile. Verbally interrupting them will affect the audio and cause editing problems during post-production.

VOX POPS

Not every interview you shoot while making a documentary is going to require such extensive planning. Documentary filmmakers often include shot interviews with ordinary people and passers-by. These interviews are called 'vox pops' which is derived from the Latin *vox populi*, which means 'voice of the people'. Conducting successful vox pops means thinking quickly and carefully. When approaching subjects for a vox pop, be polite, explain the project you are working on concisely and ask if they would like to be interviewed. Keep in mind that many people find cameras intimidating and are likely to decline. When someone agrees to film a vox pop, pay particularly attention to shot composition, sound and lighting. Using the rule of thirds is a good rule of thumb for quickly composing the shot. Ensure that your subject is adequately lit. This may involve asking them to move into a more desirable location. Monitoring sound is very important. Ensure you keep away from noisy locations such as roads, and monitor the audio through headphones while you are recording. In cases like this it is sometimes necessary to coach the interview subject, particularly to frame their answer by incorporating the question in their response.

CAPTURING B-ROLL

If you are creating a documentary about a person, it may be necessary to follow them around for a day to collect footage for your documentary. This sort of actuality can be incredibly useful when you are putting the project together. Cutting away from the interview to footage of the interview subject at work, for instance, can make your documentary much more visually interesting.

FIGURE 7.3.1 Additional footage of your subject can be invaluable when editing your documentary.

Here are some tips for capturing great b-roll:

- Coverage: Get as much coverage of your subject as you can. When you're filming b-roll, roll the camera for at least five seconds. Anything shorter than this is difficult to edit.

- Movement: When someone is moving, begin and end with them leaving the frame. This will allow you to more easily edit the shot into a sequence.

- Camera movement: When you are panning, zooming or dollying the camera, always begin and end with a static camera.

- Rule of thirds: Using the rule of thirds is a good rule of thumb when shooting documentary b-roll.

- Shallow depth of field: Using shallow depth of field can draw your viewer's eye to a particular part of the frame and makes shots look cinematic.

- Deep staging: Give your shots a sense of depth by having foreground, middle-ground and background elements.

- Perspective: Use the natural perspective of a location to lead the viewer's eye and create a visually pleasing sense of depth.

- Foreground framing: Shooting through objects such as windows and doorways creates a frame-within-a-frame that is visually appealing. Your subject can also be framed by objects in the foreground.

- Pull focus: Design shots so you can pull focus from a foreground element to an interesting and relevant background element.

- Camera angles: Although it is tempting to leave your camera at eye level, you can create variety and visual interest by using a range of camera angles, including over shots, high-angle, eye-level, low-angle and under shots.

- Shot sizes: Varying the use of shot size—ensuring that you use extreme long shots, long shots, full shots, medium shots, medium close-ups, close-ups and extreme close-ups—will bring greater variety and diversity to your b-roll footage.

Photographs are a staple of documentary film, particularly when video footage is not available to illustrate a story. Often documentary filmmakers incorporate photographs using the Ken Burns effect, where the camera will pan across and zoom in or out of a photograph.

LOGGING FOOTAGE

At the end of every day, it is important to log and sort footage to ensure the post-production process proceeds smoothly. On your computer, sort all of the interviews with accompanying audio into their own folders that are labelled appropriately. Your b-roll also needs to be organised in a folder; subfolders can be labelled with the subject of footage. At this stage, renaming and labelling files will help you identify footage quickly in post-production. If a file is named 'DSC0004', changing the name to something more specific will help you identify it later. Both operating systems and editing applications allow you to label footage with different colours. By default, Adobe Premiere Pro™ allows users to label footage with eight colours: violet, iris, caribbean, lavender, cerulean, forest, rose and mango. During the initial logging process, when you identify a shot that will definitely be used in the documentary, it's a good idea to mark this with a vibrant golden colour like mango. If time permits, roughly editing the footage in the timeline will draw your attention to the need for further footage.

Once you have identified the parts of the interview that you are going to use in your final product, it can sometimes be useful to create another version of the script that specifically includes these sound bites. This will encourage you to evaluate your pre-edited interview to ensure that the documentary flows smoothly and is easy for your audience to follow.

POST-PRODUCTION

The post-production stage is when your documentary film really comes together.

Before you start editing, it is a good idea to clean up your audio. Usually this involves noise reduction, hard limiting and normalising to ensure that the voice of your subject is loud enough. These effects can be applied in editing software like Adobe Audition™ and Audacity™.

When you are planning a documentary, it might not necessarily be obvious how it will start. It is not always engaging or interesting to begin with the interview subject identifying themselves. Think about the most dramatic or interesting part of your interview and use that as a hook for your audience. It is also a good idea to begin with the strongest shots that you captured during principal photography. The first 30 seconds of your documentary are key to engaging your audience. Once you have hooked the viewer, you can backtrack and start to explore your interview subject or topic in more detail.

LOWER THIRDS

The first time an interview subject appears on screen in a documentary, it is customary to identify them using a lower third title. This is a quick way to give your audience the information they need to know about this person, including their name and occupation. The name of the interview subject is usually identified in the first line with their occupation listed beneath this in smaller type.

Using software like Adobe Photoshop or Adobe After Effects is recommended when designing and animating lower third titles. Here are some things to consider when designing your lower thirds.

- Positioning: The title is usually positioned in the lower third of the screen. You can use either the left or right side of the screen depending on the positioning of your interview subject. However, ensure you keep within the title safe area to prevent the title being cropped by some displays. Most editors provide title-safe overlays, which show how close a title can be positioned before it is likely to be cropped. The Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers recommends positioning the titles no closer to the edge than ten per cent of the total image.

- Colour: Choose a simple colour scheme that works with the tone of your documentary.

- Typography: Select a clear, readable sans serif font such as Helvetica.

- Style: Adding an outline or drop shadow to your title will ensure that it is adequately separated from the background.

- Animation: Lower third titles are often animated to push into the frame or dissolve. Keep any animation simple so that it doesn't distract the audience from your interview subject.

- Duration: The lower third should appear on screen long enough for the audience to read it. Five seconds, in many cases, is ample time.

One Man's Trash

One Man's Trash is a documentary created by Bridget Webster that explores the work of the Melbourne-based recycling company Green Collect. The documentary was selected for Top Screen 2016.

Green Collect is an organisation that takes hard-to-recycle objects—such as computers, keyboards, laptops, printer cartridges and offices supplies—and upcycles these into products that can be sold in their retail stores. Bridget first heard about the organisation from her father.

'I found myself becoming fascinated with them,' she said. 'I realised that by creating a documentary on Green Collect I could find out more about the company, and hopefully inject some of the curiosity and fascination I had with them into the film.'

Although Bridget had initially considered creating a narrative film, she became keen to explore documentary filmmaking as an art form.

'Don't underestimate documentaries,' she said. 'They can be very powerful. If you've got a story to tell, then documentary can be a really powerful way of telling it.'

FIGURE 7.3.2 Bridget Webster's documentary about upcycling company Green Collect was selected for Top Screen for its impressive visuals and compelling story.

Developing the intention and audience for her documentary was an important stage in the pre-production process. 'I had to be very clear about what I wanted the documentary to look like and sound like,' she said, 'because I had to make a lot of split-second decisions on set about what I was going to shoot and how I was going to shoot it.'

FIGURE 7.3.3 A still from Bridget Webster's documentary *One Man's Trash*
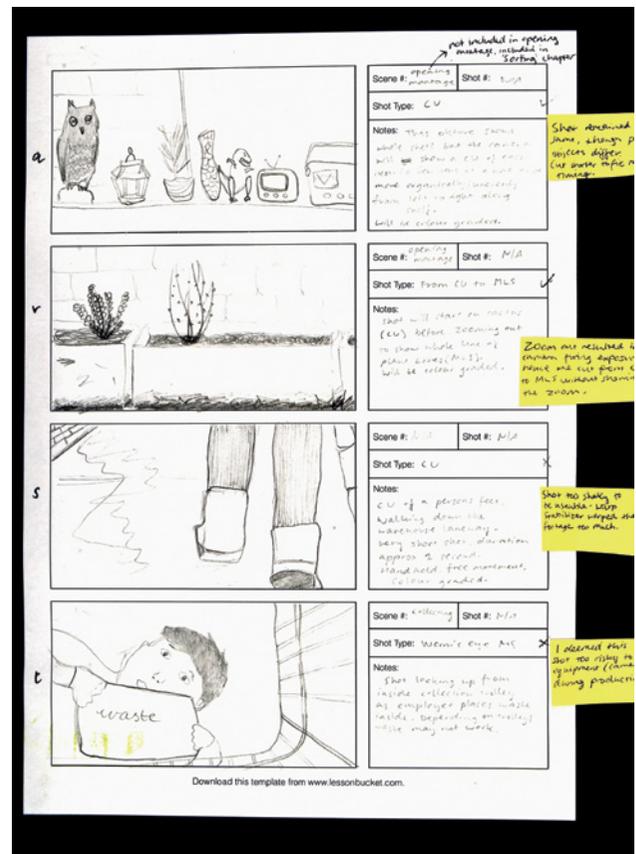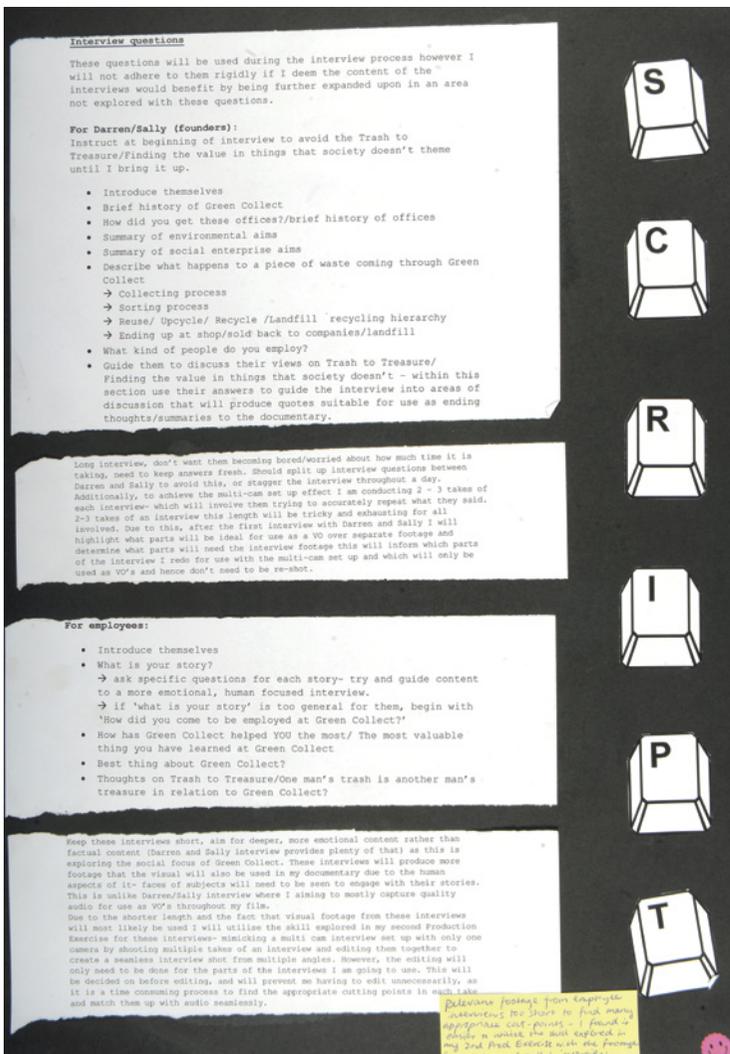
FIGURES 7.3.4 AND 7.3.5 Bridget's script included interview questions and possible responses and her storyboards reflected a clear sense of purpose for the shoot.

During the pre-production of her documentary, Bridget thought carefully about who she would interview and how she would frame the story. She imagined the documentary following the journey that a piece of waste takes from collection, through to upcycling and finally retail.

Bridget acknowledges the difficulty of storyboarding documentaries. Nevertheless, she encourages anyone working in this form to visit locations to take photographs and get ideas for framing interviews and shooting b-roll. While shooting documentaries, she stresses the importance of improvising and responding to opportunities that arise. While making *One Man's Trash*, Bridget accompanied one of the company's employees on a collection route, during which she was forced to think quickly and creatively about the sorts of shots she needed to capture.

She also encourages students to be well-prepared for production. On the first day of shooting, the amount of filming that she did quickly drained her batteries and she was forced to arrange another day to capture everything.

One of her planned interview subjects also dropped out at the last minute, forcing her to improvise and find someone else. 'Be calm and collected,' she said.

Bridget used her production exercises to develop an understanding of how to capture clear sound when shooting a documentary, exploring equipment, acquisition and mixing. 'By the time it came to production, I was really confident about how I could capture professional sound.'

By the time she finished shooting, Bridget had over ten hours of footage to edit into a ten-minute film. 'I think it's important not to get overwhelmed,' she said, encouraging students to sort through footage at the end of every day, watching takes, labelling files and organising them into folders. She recommends that students allow ample time to edit their films. She spent hours editing clips, cleaning up sound and colour-grading her footage.

7.4 Animation

If you are creating an animation it must be less than ten minutes in duration. The production design plan will address codes and conventions, formats and processes appropriate to your intention, audience and media form.

THE PRODUCTION DESIGN PLAN

The production design plan may include:

- brainstorming
- research folio
- production exercises
- intention
- audience
- treatment
- screenplay
- storyboards
- shot list
- scheduling documents
- codes and conventions and specifications appropriate to your genre and style, such as: character design, model design, set design, location, camera techniques, techniques of engagement, edit details, lighting, voice talent, music and sound effects
- production notes.

RESEARCH PORTFOLIO

Once you have settled on an idea for your animation, you will need to complete your research portfolio. Your research portfolio will examine codes, conventions, narrative, genres and styles relevant to your production, making specific and detailed reference to how these techniques will be used in your animation. Here are ideas that you might use as starting points for your research.

- Narrative: Explore animations in a similar style and genre to your intended production. Consider the opening, development and resolution of the narrative. Comment on what audiences will expect from your animation and how you will structure your narrative accordingly.
- Genre: Analyse animations with a similar genre to your intended production. What are the conventions that audiences expect from these genres? How will you meet these expectations while making your animation feel fresh and surprising?

- Style: Analyse the style of notable animators. This might involve a written discussion accompanied by annotated stills. It might also be appropriate to comment on how a particular style was achieved.
- Animation techniques: Conduct research into the techniques and processes used to create your selected style of animation. These may include books, articles or online videos.

PRODUCTION EXERCISES

Following your research portfolio, you will undertake at least two production exercises to explore the technology, equipment and processes relevant to your selected style of animation. Each of these exercises will be accompanied by documentation including an intention and evaluation. The best production exercises will be related to your research and proposed production, giving you the opportunity to explore the equipment and processes necessary to complete your project.

- Animation techniques: Explore the animation techniques required to make your production. If you are creating a claymation this might involve constructing figures, lighting and capturing frames. Hand-drawn animators will explore workflow processes including drawing, capturing and animating frames.
- Walk cycles: Walking is one of the most difficult parts of animation; one of your production exercises might explore the most efficient way to create a walk cycle.
- Software: Most animators will use some type of software to capture and edit frames into a complete animation. The production exercises are a good opportunity to see how software like Adobe After Effects, Adobe Flash, Adobe Animate, Dragonframe and Toon Boom Studio can help you achieve your vision.
- Voice recording: Recording voices for characters is often an essential part of the animation process. Experiment with the best microphones and environment to record your actors.

- Lip syncing: Record test dialogue and develop a process for syncing your animation to your characters' lips.
- Sound editing: Sound is one of the most important parts of your animation, helping to immerse your audience in the world you have created—develop a process for recording, editing and mixing your soundtrack.

TRADITIONAL ANIMATION

Traditional animation is one of the most challenging styles to master. It involves drawing every frame sequentially on pieces of paper. The individual frames can be drawn on a light box, which allows you to see the previous frame. Because it is time-consuming, traditional animation is usually drawn at a rate of twelve frames every second. The progress of your animation can be viewed by physically flipping through the illustrations. The individual frames can be photographed and animated in video-editing software by setting the duration of every illustration to two frames. Given the time-consuming nature of traditional animation, it is best to develop a simple concept that can be explored in a short time frame, such as ninety seconds.

CLAYMATION

If you decide to create a stop-motion animation out of original models, it is a good idea to sketch what you want your models to look like before you begin sculpting them. This gives you an indication of the materials that you will need to create your models. Students often assume that they can create their models entirely from modelling clay. This is not the best idea because the figurines can easily become deformed under the constant manipulation of the animation process.

It is best to begin by creating a skeleton of your models out of aluminium wire. Using a pair of pliers and wire-cutters, twist the aluminium wire into a strong, pliable skeleton, which can be bulked up with aluminium foil. This lightweight framework (called an armature) allows modelling clay to be applied to the outside frame to create a figure. When creating a model, it is important to ensure that it has large enough feet to carry the weight of its body. If a figurine falls over, you will have little choice but to reshoot the scene.

If you are not confident in creating your own models for a stop-motion animation, there are many alternatives, such as using action figures and other everyday objects. *Power of Imagination*, a short animation by past VCE Media
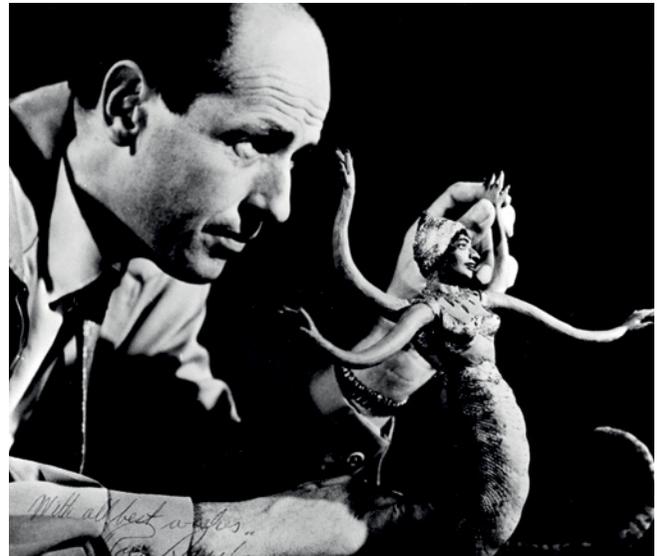
FIGURE 7.4.1 Acclaimed animator Ray Harryhausen, whose work includes *King Kong* (1933) and *Jason and the Argonauts* (1963), is renowned for combining stop-motion animation and live action footage.

student Alex Clapp, demonstrates how simple household objects can be used to create an entertaining and engaging animation. The film is about a student who falls asleep at his desk. The objects around him, including a stapler, paperclips and a desk lamp, come to life and join forces to help him stay awake and study.

Finding a suitable location in which to film your animation is essential. As filming an animation can be a lengthy process, you need an area where you can have your models set up for a long period of time.

FIGURE 7.4.2 *Mary and Max* (2009) is a stop-motion feature that was directed by Australian animator, Adam Elliot.

The area should be completely void of natural light or you risk unwanted lighting variations between the still frames. This phenomenon, known as luminance flicker, is one of the most troublesome difficulties that animators encounter.

When you are organising the set for your animation, use desk lamps to create a three-point lighting system, which will give you greater control over the shading and shadows produced by the lighting.

If you are using a still photographic camera, ensure that you operate the manual settings and avoid using a flash. Take a few practice images to work out which settings are best for the lighting that you have on set. Once you have decided on the appropriate settings for your animation, stick to them! Slight changes in exposure, aperture and focus can cause problems when you are trying to create the illusion of seamless movement in the editing stage. Take twenty-four frames for every second of footage in your film.

There are a number of dedicated stop-motion animation programs, such as Boinx iStopMotion™ and Stop Motion Pro™, which provide a useful platform for creating animation films. They usually involve connecting a digital video or still photographic camera directly to your computer so shots can be taken, reviewed and reordered as you go along. This provides a number of advantages, including the ability to see several frames at once—a technique known as onion skinning—which can help create more fluid and dynamic movement in your animation.

If you have created your animation solely using a digital video camera, you will need to assemble the footage in an editing program such as iMovie, Windows Movie Maker, Apple Final Cut Pro or Adobe Premiere Pro. Set the length of each image to one frame. The advantage of editing individual frames is that they can easily be rearranged and reused. Audacity is a free online program that can be downloaded and used to record and edit sound.

CUT-OUT ANIMATION

Terry Gilliam, a member of the comedy troupe Monty Python, is one of the most notable cut-out animators. Gilliam would use appropriated material such as books, magazines, old photographs and greeting cards combined with his own airbrushed backgrounds to animate sequences for Monty Python's Flying Circus and films like *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975). He would combine these elements and take twenty-four photographs for every second of film. Gilliam would cut out different images using

a scalpel and combine them to create a comedic effect (see Figure 7.4.3). After cutting out the images, Gilliam would black the edges of every element with a marker to help sell the illusion that they were real objects instead of pieces of paper.

FIGURE 7.4.3 Terry Gilliam worked with images cut from books, magazines and old photographs to create animations for Monty Python.

When working in this form, it is important to recognise its limitations. Cut-out animation, according to Gilliam, is best suited to simple ideas and quick, sudden movements.

Gilliam used interesting gimmicks to avoid creating walk cycles. In many cases a character might simply float into frame without the legs moving at all. If more articulation was required, he might replace a character's legs with wheels or have them bounce into frame. To simplify the process of lip syncing to audio, Gilliam would create simple mouths that could be pulled open and shut.

Several photographs are typically required to build a character. A character might consist of a separate torso, lower body, arms, legs, head and mouth. A great deal of articulation can be achieved by combining these elements.

Although it is possible to complete traditional cut-out animation such as this with a digital camera, most modern animators prefer to construct their sets and models in Adobe Photoshop and animate them in Adobe After Effects. The long running television program South Park used cut-out animation for its pilot but subsequently moved to digital animation to speed up the workflow. Each of the characters is constructed like a puppet that can be moved and articulated in the animation software Maya. The paper textures that were used in the original episode were scanned and are used as the basis for constructing new characters and sets.

DIGITAL ANIMATION

Two-dimensional digital animation can be completed in a range of software applications including Adobe Flash™, Adobe After Effects™, Adobe Animate™ and Toon Boom Studio™. The workflow is similar no matter what software you decide to use.

- Designing characters: Start by sketching out your characters. This can be done on paper or in software like Adobe Photoshop. When you are designing the character, it's a good idea to draw your character in full from a range of angles, including front on, three-quarter view and from behind. Having a range of views will give you greater flexibility when blocking out scenes later on.

- Designing walk cycles: Creating a walk cycle for your characters is one of the most challenging parts of animation. Sketching out a walk cycle in pre-production will help you design this later on.

- Designing faces: When you are animating, the design of a character's face is particularly important and typically involves drawing each of the following elements: nose, right eyebrow, left eyebrow, right pupil, left pupil, left eyelid, right eyelid, and a range of phonetic mouth shapes and expressions.

- Rigging your character: In your animation software, you will need to rig your character. This involves creating every element of a character that you would like to animate on a different layer; for example, face, torso, arms and legs. Nesting objects within each other will simplify the animation process. Having all of the elements for a face—such as eyes, mouths and noses—within an object called 'head' will enable you to move all of these elements when you animate the head.

- Designing backgrounds: When you are designing a scene, don't forget to pay attention to the background. Having elements in your foreground, middle-ground and background will help to make your scene look more interesting.

- Recording audio: Before you start to animate, you will need to record your voices. These will provide the foundation for your scenes and allow you to start lip syncing.
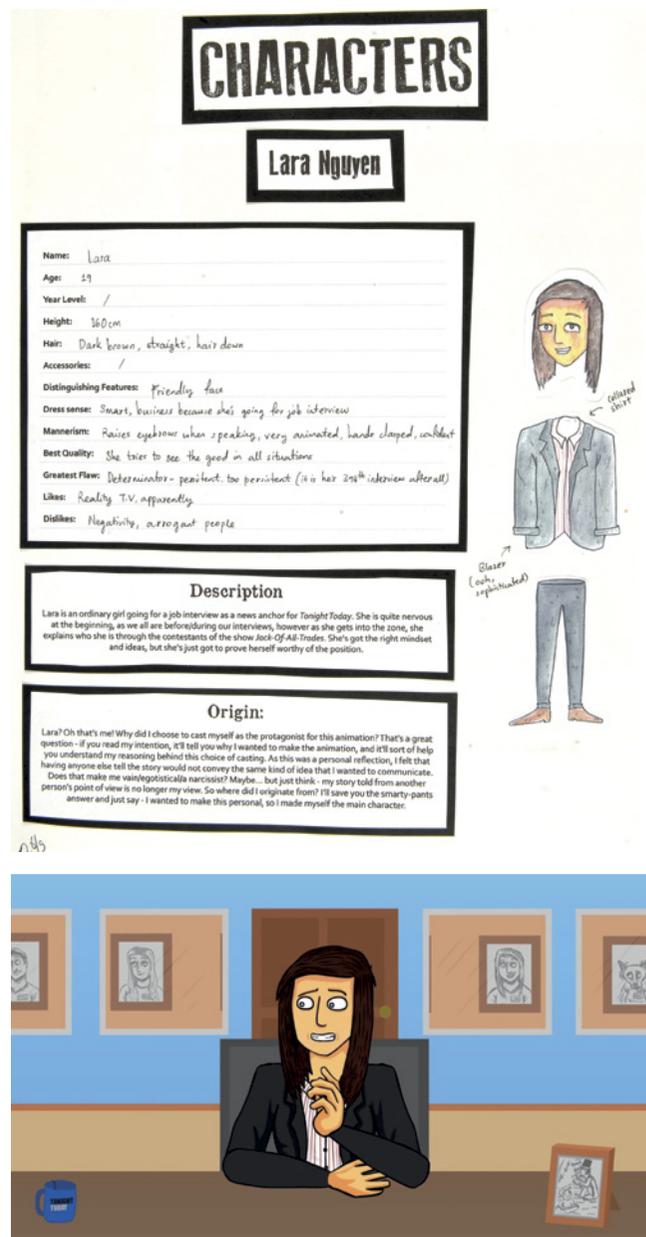
FIGURES 7.4.4 AND 7.4.5 *Introspection* was selected for Top Screen. The design plan for the film reflects considerable attention to character design.

- Animating: You will typically start animating a scene as a full shot, posing and moving your characters in a location.

- Animating camera: Software such as Adobe After Effects, Adobe Animate and Toon Boom Studio has virtual cameras that can be animated and moved around your set. This allows you to pan, zoom and cut to different shot sizes within a scene.

7.5 Audio

Students creating an audio production are required to make a product at least eight minutes in duration. The production design plan will address codes and conventions, formats and processes appropriate to your intention, audience and media form.

THE PRODUCTION DESIGN PLAN

The production design plan may include:

- brainstorming
- research folio
- production exercises
- intention
- audience
- script
- discussion points or interview questions
- flowchart of content
- scheduling documents
- codes and conventions and specifications appropriate to your genre and/or media form, such as: style and/or genre, techniques of engagement, dialogue, voice-overs, sound effects, music and edit details
- production notes.

RESEARCH PORTFOLIO

Once you have settled on an idea for your audio production, you will need to complete your research portfolio. Your research portfolio will examine codes, conventions, narrative, genres and styles relevant to your production, making specific and detailed reference to how these techniques will be used in your audio production. Here are some ideas that you might use as starting points for your research.

- Analyse similar genres to your proposed production. If you are creating a radio documentary, for example, you might find relevant examples and comment on their structure and style. An analysis of radio drama might comment on story structure and the development of a narrative using sound effects, dialogue and music.
- Analyse the way similar productions use audio to engage the audience and compensate for a lack of visuals.

PRODUCTION EXERCISES

Following your research portfolio, you will undertake at least two production exercises to explore the technology, equipment and processes relevant to your selected style of audio production. Each of these exercises will be accompanied by documentation including an intention and evaluation. The best production exercises will be related to your research and proposed production, giving you the opportunity to explore the equipment and processes necessary to complete your project.

- Experiment with the microphones you intend to use during your production by recording a practice script.
- Create an environment for recording your production and perform experiments in your homemade studio.
- Develop a post-production workflow by identifying the most effective way to reduce noise, clean up sound and normalise audio.
- Identify the best EQ settings for your voice talent.
- Practise editing a short sequence, combining voice-overs, sound effects, music, bumpers and atmosphere into a finished package.
- Learn how to export, format and upload a podcast.

GENRE

If you decide to create an audio product, you will need to identify a genre or style of audio production that appeals to you. Many broadcast radio programs predominantly comprise music with occasional announcing and ad-lib work from announcers. Although this can be entertaining to listen to, it is not an acceptable format for your production. You are expected to create something individual and unique, which is not achieved by simply playing back other people's music. Fortunately, radio production is more than just playing music. A brief search through the channels of your radio reveals the variety of creative styles and genres possible in radio format. Here are some genres, styles and formats that you might consider developing including radio dramas, documentaries, news, current affairs and panel discussions.

FIGURE 7.5.1 Gregory Peck and Kay Brinker in Hitch-Hike Poker, a radio play about a hitchhiking war veteran

RADIO DRAMA

Podcasting has led to a resurgence in radio dramas. Podcasts like Welcome to Night Vale and The Black Tapes have demonstrated that this classic format is still relevant. If you are looking for inspiration, the internet is a wonderful source of classic radio dramas like *Suspense*, *X-Minus 1* and *Murder at Midnight*. Although radio dramas reached the peak of their popularity in the 1950s (see Figure 7.5.1), organisations such as the BBC still produce a small number including the dramatisation of Terry Pratchett and Neil Gaiman's novel *Good Omens*.

SCRIPTING YOUR RADIO DRAMA

```
             SCENE 1

THE GRAVEYARD IS FILLED WITH THE
EERIE SOUND OF WIND. LEAVES RUSTLE
AND, IN THE DISTANCE, A WOLF HOWLS.
THUNDER RUMBLES OMINOUSLY.

JOHN: Okay … just a bit more.

A SHOVEL DIGGING IN THE DIRT, THE
SOUND OF EARTH BEING THROWN TO ONE
SIDE.

MEL:  (frustrated) I don't know what
      you're trying to prove.

JOHN: Here we are (BEAT) … Come and
      help me.
```

```
WOOD SPLINTERS AND BREAKS, THERE IS
A CREAKING SOUND AS A COFFIN OPENS.

MEL:  (hesitantly) But it's empty.

THUNDER RUMBLES.

MEL:  What does it mean?

JOHN: It means we're in trouble.
      (PAUSE) Big, big trouble.

A MALEVOLENT WHISPERING.

MEL:  What was that?

JOHN: Let's get out of here!

THE SOUND OF RUNNING, WHISPERS. A
SUDDEN SCREAM AND A SPLASHING SOUND.

CREEPY ORGAN MUSIC. FADE.
```

SOUND EFFECTS AND MUSIC

When you are recording your radio drama, it's possible to record your own foley sounds or make use of Creative Commons repositories such as Freesound.

DOCUMENTARY, NEWS AND CURRENT AFFAIRS

Radio and podcasts are ideal platforms for exploring ideas and issues through news, current affairs and documentaries. If you are interested in exploring the journalistic potential of radio and podcasting, it is worthwhile listening to a range of these programs to inform your approach to the production. The ABC produces a number of effective programs in this genre, including Triple J's *Hack* and Radio National's *Background Briefing*.

PLANNING YOUR PROGRAM

Planning an effective radio documentary or current affairs segment begins with research. Find out as much as you can about the event, idea or issue that you are exploring in your program. When you are researching, you will identify possible interview subjects. When considering an interview subject, think about their voice and whether it is suited to radio. Find additional interviewees in case someone falls through or is unsuitable. Given the nature of this form, engaging your audience means crafting a story using a combination of scripted voice-overs, interviews, actuality and music. Varying the voices and sounds in your program will help to engage your listener.

> **Conventions of radio current affairs**
>
> - Actuality: Short, atmospheric pieces of audio recorded on location, which can be used to set the scene for your listener and create a sense of atmosphere.
> - Sting: A short musical interlude that is used to break up a program.
> - Taster: A short, intriguing grab from a segment, which is used towards the beginning of a program.
> - Vox pop: Short interviews with members of the general public, which are cut together into a short package.

When you are writing a script, it is important to use straightforward, everyday language. Radio is a spoken medium. Imagine talking directly to your audience. Maintain a conversational tone without using slang. Voice-overs that are too formal will seem stilted and unnatural. Use short sentences and write in an active voice. Avoid sentences that have sub-clauses. Long and difficult-to-read sentences will cause difficulties when you are recording. Your script should engage the listener and help your program to move seamlessly between segments. Keep

your voice-over brief, eliminate unnecessary words and unnecessary details. Read your copy aloud as you are writing to ensure clarity and readability.

NEWS AND CURRENT AFFAIRS SCRIPTS

There is no standard format for radio news, current affairs and documentary. This format allows you to clearly identify voice-overs, interview questions, music, sound effects, actuality and edit details.

```
ACTUALITY: The sound tractor, sheep
bleating …

<<fade out>>

Announcer: Farming communities are
suffering. The financial hardships of
living on the land means that young
people are leaving the country in
droves. Unlike most of his friends,
Bradley James has decided to stay in
the country and work the family farm …

MUSIC: The opening bars of a country
and western song.

<<fade down>>

What prompted you to take up farming?

[Possible responses: It's a family
tradition. Living and working in the
country provides a better lifestyle.
Farming is an important industry.]

What makes farming a difficult
occupation?

[Possible responses: It's physically
demanding. Early mornings and late
nights. Running a farm is a financial
gamble, you are at the mercy of the
weather …]

<<fade out>>

Minister: We need to do more to keep
young people in regional Australia.

Announcer: This exodus has attracted a
great deal of attention, particularly
from the Minister for Agriculture, who
spoke at a town meeting last year.

SOUND FX: The sound of an audience in
a town hall.

Minister: We simply need to do
something about it. The future of our
food security depends on the continued
prosperity of Aussie farmers.
```

PREPARING FOR INTERVIEWS

As a radio journalist, always consider the role that an interview will play in your program. Interviews can be informative, investigative or emotional:

- Informative questions give your listener key facts and details about events or issues. Although these types of interviews are often used in news bulletins, they also have a place in current affairs, giving the listener knowledge and context that forms the foundation for deeper analysis.

- Investigative interviews often go deeper than this, exploring the causes of a conflict or event. They are an opportunity to provide deeper analysis and discussion.

- Emotional interviews are conducted with anyone who has an emotional involvement in a story. These bring human interest, but require great sensitivity.

When writing interview questions it is important to ask open questions that give your interviewee a chance to go in-depth on a topic. These responses can be cut together with voice-overs into a seamless package.

ON LOCATION

When you are on location, choose a quiet spot for recording. Avoid large spaces with hard floors that might cause a reverb. Carpetted spaces with soft furnishing are preferable because they absorb sounds. Turn off refrigerators, air-conditioners or any other devices that might interfere with recording. Locations with an interesting ambience often add texture and variety to your program. Recording your interview twice—once with the ambience of the location, then in a more controlled environment—will give you more varied material to use in the edit.

On location, capture as much audio as you can. Location sounds and ambience can be used to engage your audience and set the scene for your story. Also look for opportunities to record voice-overs on location. These bring spontaneity and a sense of atmosphere to your program.

FIGURE 7.5.2 Conducting an interview for a radio news or current affairs segment is similar to running an interview for a documentary film.

Throughout the interview, it is important to get your microphone close to the interviewee. Use a pair of headphones to monitor the interview as you are recording. While you are recording, keep your eye on the recording levels to ensure that they average around –12 decibels (dB).

At the end of every day, make copies of your audio files and label them appropriately. Listen to your location recordings. Documentaries and news and current affairs programs usually have a greater variety of recordings than a panel discussion or radio drama. If your audio editing software allows batch process, this can be an efficient way to ensure every interview and voice-over is at the same level and loudness. When you are cutting a radio program like this, it's recommended that you use a multi-track editor like Audacity, GarageBand or Adobe Audition. Place each of your interviews on a track. Trim the most interesting sound bites from your recordings. At this stage, it might be necessary to change planned voice-overs so that the material flows smoothly.

PANEL DISCUSSIONS

There are many podcasts and radio programs that take the format of panel discussions. These rely on the personality and banter between panellists to explore topics and engage the audience.

PLANNING YOUR PANEL DISCUSSION

Although this might seem like an easier option than a scripted documentary or radio drama, it still requires careful planning to be successful.

- Selecting panellists: Selecting interesting and knowledgeable panellists for your program is essential. Choose people who know your subject matter and are confident speakers.
- Consider chemistry: When selecting guests, always consider a combination of people who will be able to engage in entertaining banter or intelligent debate.
- Running sheet: As the producer of the podcast, devise a running sheet for the episode, which contains discussion points, interview questions or other stimulus material. When you are planning, think realistically about the duration of each segment and how you can keep your audience engaged. Breaking up the discussion with sweepers, short musical interludes or other content is a good way to break up an episode and keep the audience engaged.

- Scripted monologues: Although panel discussions consist largely of unscripted banter, writing a short introduction for every segment can give your program greater polish and structure.

FIGURE 7.5.3 Panel discussions have become a popular format for podcasts. Ensure that you are well-prepared by selecting your panellists appropriately, preparing a running sheet and scripting monologues.

BUMPERS, STINGERS AND SWEEPERS

Short sounds and musical interludes can be used to break up the flow of your podcast and introduce new segments. These help to orient listeners and give them a break from discussion. There are many sites that sell royalty-free bumpers, stingers and sweepers. It is very straightforward to combine voices and the royalty-free loops that are found in most music software programs in order to create your own. Always consider that these interludes should reflect the tone and style of your program.

RECORDING AUDIO

- Ensure that your 'studio' recording environment is absolutely quiet. Not everyone has access to a soundproof recording studio, but it is still possible to create a quiet recording environment. For example, blankets can be hung from the walls to absorb outside sound.
- Use an external microphone. Although it is possible to record directly from computers and laptops, an external microphone will contribute significantly to the quality of your audio.

- Before you start recording, do a sound check by reading through a section of your script. Set the recording level to avoid 'clipping', the distortion that occurs when the signal is too high.

- Be wary of plosive sounds like 'p' and 't' that can cause clipping.

- Practise and coach your guests on correct microphone technique.

- Everyone who is speaking should wear a pair of headphones throughout the recording to monitor audio levels.

- Try to avoid making and recording sounds that might come from handling the objects around you, such as tapping the microphone, clicking pens or knocking the desk.

- It is not easy to edit errors in the middle of dialogue. If you make a mistake, the best approach is to take a breath and start again from the beginning of the sentence.

- If you are on location, capture a few seconds of ambience or environmental sound. This is a great way to orient the listener at the beginning of a radio segment. For example, if you are creating a segment about shopping, you could start with the ambient sounds of a shopping complex combined with the sound effect of a cash register.

- Audio recorders and audio software usually give you a choice of formats to record in. WAV or AIFF are preferable because they are raw, uncompressed audio. MP3s can be recorded when you are running out of space but threaten audio quality by removing frequencies typically beyond human hearing.

- When you are recording audio, try to ensure that the voices and sounds average around –18 dB on the meter. This gives you enough room for your talent to speak louder without the sound clipping.

When recording a radio program or podcast, practising correct microphone technique is essential. While filters can be applied to enhance voices in post-production, little can be done to improve poorly recorded audio.

In a studio environment, it is essential to help talent use microphones correctly. Ideally a microphone should be positioned about 15 cm from your mouth. Being too close to the microphone will accentuate low-frequency sounds and make your voice sound too muddy. When speaking into the microphone, be aware that plosive sounds, particularly words beginning with 'p' and 't', can cause popping sounds as air hits the diaphragm of the microphone. This can be avoided by using a pop filter or foam windsock. When you are speaking, it is important to speak directly into the microphone so that you capture directional, high-frequency sounds. Before recording, ensure that your talent is comfortable and they don't have to turn away from the microphone to speak to each other.

Recording interviews and vox pops on location requires practice and skill to move the microphone to an appropriate distance from the speaker while avoiding handling noise. Before conducting an interview on location, do your best to avoid ambient noise, such as traffic or reverb. As you are interviewing the subject, listen to the flow of the conversation and anticipate when you will need to move the microphone. Depending on the directionality of your microphone, you might inadvertently miss what a speaker has said. Keep in mind that adjusting your grip on the microphone will result in unwanted handling noise.

EDITING AUDIO

Editing audio requires precision and attention to detail. Understanding the strengths and limitations of your audio editor is important. Most audio editors, including Audacity, GarageBand and Adobe Audition, allow multi-track editing. Editing your audio production in a multi-track editor is recommended because you can have individual tracks for voice-overs, sound effects and music, making it easier to mix these elements.

When editing out mistakes from dialogue or voice-overs, try not to cut too close to a word or phrase. If you do not maintain the rhythm of the person speaking, your audience will notice the cut. Adding a short cross-dissolve between clips can make the transition less noticeable.

NOISE REMOVAL

Apply a slight noise removal filter to your dialogue if necessary. In audio editing, noise removal involves taking out consistent, unwanted frequencies produced by objects like air-conditioners and microphones.

The first step in removing noise involves finding a moment of 'silence' in your recording and capturing a profile of that sound. Most audio editors then allow you to adjust the percentage of noise reduction and the number of decibels that you want to reduce that sound by. There are no absolute rules when removing noise from recordings. As you apply the filter, listen to the recording carefully through a pair of headphones until it sounds desirable. Also, be aware that excessive noise reduction can often result in artefacts that almost sound worse than the noise you were trying to remove in the first place.

NORMALISING

When you were recording audio, you probably tried to ensure that the sound averaged around –18 dB, so it did not clip. Before you start editing your audio, it is a good idea to normalise the clip. Normalising will increase the maximum volume of your recording. Normalising to –0.1 dB is the most you can increase before clipping occurs.

EQUALISATION

Most editors allow you to adjust the equalisation (EQ). This can be used to enhance the voices of your presenters. Editors like GarageBand and Adobe Audition have non-destructive parametric equalisers, which can be adjusted to eliminate unwanted frequencies and accentuate the desirable characteristics of voices.

Male voices are usually between 80 and 180 Hz, while female voices are about an octave higher at between 160 and 260 Hz.

Parametric equalisers can be used to apply a high-pass filter to everything below 80 Hz. This will reduce low-frequency rumbling, such as wind noise and microphone handling, while preserving the recorded voices.

Parametric equalisers can also be used to reduce sibilant sounds—the harsh, high-frequency sounds that occur when people utter consonants like 's' and 'z'. These can be negated by reducing sounds above 8000 Hz.

While adjusting low and high frequency sounds using a parametric equaliser can improve the quality of your audio by removing unwanted frequencies, voices can be enhanced by boosting frequencies within the range of human speech. Slightly increasing the upper or lower ranges of male and female voices by about 3–5 dB can 'sweeten' sound and improve the clarity of voices.

When it comes to equalisation, there are no absolute rules. Listen carefully to the voices that you have recorded and do what sounds best. If a voice sounds too muddy or too reedy, then you have gone too far with your EQ adjustments.

COMPRESSION

Multi-track audio editors also have compressors that can be applied to voices. A multiband compressor is a good place to start. Many audio editors have presets for different kinds of compression. Selecting a broadcast style compressor is a quick and convenient way to improve the overall sound of your audio.

Multi-track audio editors often have buttons that can turn effects on or off. When you are listening to audio, it is a good idea to toggle these buttons to determine whether you are making discernible improvements to the audio.

EXPORTING AUDIO

MP3 has been adopted as a standard for publishing podcasts. It is compatible with the majority of platforms and devices. As users typically download episodes of a podcast to their media players, it is important to strike the right balance between quality and file size. It is preferable to use a stereo file encoded at a constant bitrate of 256 kbps at 44.1 kHz. For a 30-minute episode, this compression will typically result in a 60 MB file.

PUBLISHING A PODCAST

Publishing a podcast is a little more complicated than using sites like YouTube and Vimeo™ to share videos. While there are a number of sites that will publish your podcast for a fee, the basic requirements for publishing a podcast are a web server and RSS feed. Soundcloud is a service that allows users to share audio files. Users are provided with the address of their RSS feed, which can subsequently be shared with services like iTunes so people can download your podcast.

7.6 Photography

Students undertaking photography are expected to produce a photographic work or series with at least ten original photographs. Discuss the scope of your project with your teacher. The production design plan will address codes and conventions, formats and processes appropriate to your intention, audience and media form.

THE PRODUCTION DESIGN PLAN

The production design plan may include:

- brainstorming
- research folio
- production exercises
- intention
- audience
- outline of content
- mock-ups or storyboards
- scheduling documents
- codes and conventions and specifications appropriate to your genre and/or media form, such as: camera techniques (including shutter speed, aperture, ISO, lens choice), lighting, flashes, locations, composition, art direction, models, styling, direction and techniques of engagement
- production notes.

SELECTING A STYLE OR GENRE

In VCE Media, there are a range of different styles and genres of photography that you can explore, such as advertising, aerial, architecture, astrophotography, bands, candid, celebrity, conceptual, decor, events, family, fantasy, fashion, fine art, flora, food, glamour, industrial, landscape, live performances, macro, microscopic, narrative, news, portraiture, products, property, public relations, social documentary, sports, still life, street photography, surrealist, telescopic, tourism, travel, underwater and wildlife.

RESEARCH PORTFOLIO

Once you have settled on an idea for your photographs, you will need to complete your research portfolio. Your research portfolio will examine codes, conventions, narrative, genres and styles relevant to your production, making specific and detailed reference to how these techniques will be used in your audio production. Here are some ideas that you might use as starting points for your research:

- Explore the style of a photographer working in a similar genre of photography. This exploration might include a written commentary on how the photographer explores ideas or achieves particular effects. Your discussion might be accompanied by annotated examples of this photographer's work.

- Analyse the use of photographic techniques in the selected work by commenting on the use of particular codes such as camera techniques, framing, positioning of subjects, *mise en scène*, lighting and the use of post-production techniques.
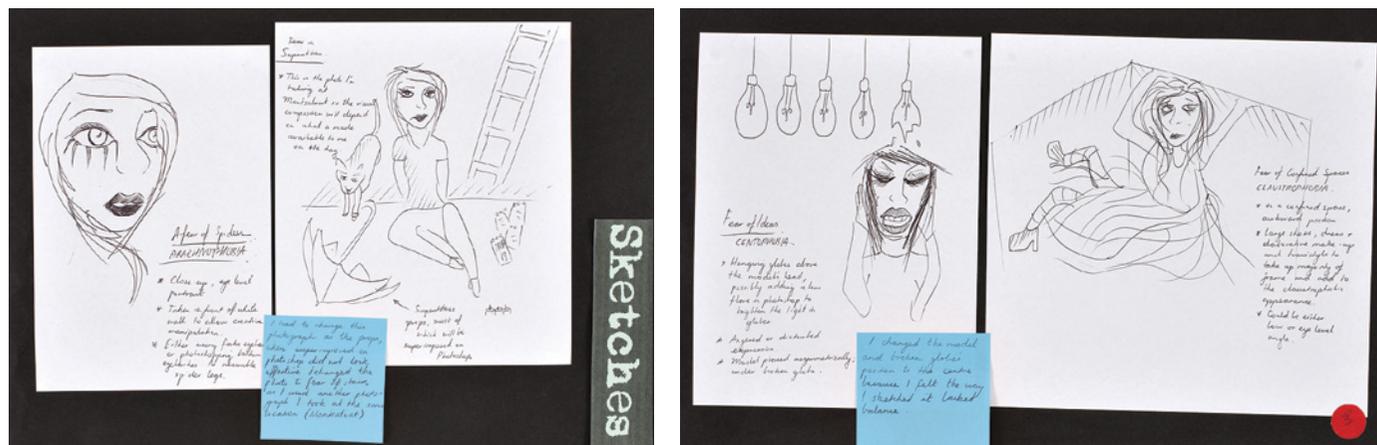
FIGURE 7.6.1 Examples of mock-ups created by a VCE Media student for a Phobias photographic folio

PRODUCTION EXERCISES

Following your research portfolio, you will undertake at least two production exercises to explore the technology, equipment and processes relevant to your selected style and genre of photography. Each of these exercises will be accompanied by documentation including an intention and evaluation. The best production exercises will be related to your research and proposed production, giving you the opportunity to explore the equipment and processes necessary to complete your project.

- One of the best production exercises is simply getting to know your camera, exploring its manual settings and options so that you become a more effective and efficient photographer. This exercise might involve understanding how best to use settings such as aperture, ISO, shutter speed and white balance.

- Explore the implications of using different lenses. For example, you might ask yourself which focal length and aperture is best-suited to the genre and style of your production.

- Experiment with the different styles and sources of lighting required to complete your production. This could include experiments with natural, practical or studio lights. You might also experiment with reflectors and diffusion to achieve desired effects.

- Both onboard and off-camera flashes require practice if they are to be used effectively.

- Some styles of photography, such as street or event photography, require quick thinking and familiarity with your camera—use the production exercises as an opportunity to practise these skills.

- The production exercises can also be used to develop your understanding of how to achieve particular photographic effects, such as strobe photography or long exposures.

- Explore the features of your photo-editing software, including programs like Adobe Photoshop or Adobe Lightroom. You might, for example, learn how to use histograms, filters and other advanced features.

- Explore the best options for printing and mounting your photographs. Experiment with different types of paper stock and printers.

FIGURE 7.6.2 Depth of field

PLANNING

The best photographic design plans show a clear sense of purpose going into a shoot. Successful plans clearly define what the final photographs will look like, giving a sense of how elements such as colour, lighting, framing and *mise en scène* will be used.

PHOTOGRAPHY TECHNIQUES

When you are planning a series of photographs, consider using the following camera and compositional techniques.

CAMERA

- Raw: Many cameras allow photographers to shoot in a raw format, giving them greater flexibility to manipulate images in post-production by preserving details in shadows and highlights. If your camera is capable of shooting raw, give it a shot and experiment with it later.

- Aperture: Changing the aperture of your lens gives you control over the depth of field (see Figure 7.6.2). Shallow depth of field can be used to draw the audience's eye to a particular element, while deep focus allows them to see into the background.

- Shutter speed: Adjusting the shutter speed of your camera allows you to either capture crisp, clear action or motion blurs. Using long exposures can also create interesting effects like those shown in Figure 7.6.3).

- Burst mode: If you are doing event or sports photography, make use of burst mode on your camera. This allows you to capture the right moment by taking a series of shots in quick succession.

FIGURE 7.6.3 This example of motion photography was created using a slow shutter speed.

- Neutral density filters: A neutral density filter can be attached to the lens of your camera to reduce exposure. This allows photographers to reduce the depth of field on bright days or use longer shutter speeds to capture motion blurs during the day.

- HDR: The high dynamic range function on a camera allows photographers to take three shots of an image: one underexposed, one correctly exposed and one over-exposed. These shots can be combined with software on your computer or smartphone to preserve detail in difficult lighting situations.

FIGURE 7.6.4 An HDR image

COMPOSITION

FIGURE 7.6.5 Symmetry: Balancing objects within the frame can create a sense of harmony in your composition.

FIGURE 7.6.6 Asymmetry: Asymmetrical composition can add dynamism to an image by creating disequilibrium.

FIGURE 7.6.7 Rule of thirds: Dividing the frame into thirds and positioning your subject along these lines or their intersections is a common photographic convention.

FIGURE 7.6.8 Perspective: Perspective will bring a sense of depth to your photograph that leads the viewer's eye into the image.

FIGURE 7.6.9 Leading lines: Leading lines can be created by natural objects, props or architectural features. They draw the audience's eye into the composition and create a pleasing sense of perspective.

FIGURE 7.6.10 Deep staging: Add depth to your images by considering how you can use the foreground, middle-ground and background to bring meaning and life to your photograph.

FIGURE 7.6.11 Flat staging: A lack of perspective in shots can draw your viewer's eye to a particular element or create a sense of banality.

FIGURE 7.6.12 Frame within a frame: Using frames in the foreground, such as objects, doors or windows, is a good way to guide the eye to the subject of your photograph.

FIGURE 7.6.13 Space: Positive space is the subject of your photograph and negative space is the area that surrounds it. You can decide to have your subject fill the frame or be dominated by the background.

FIGURE 7.6.14 Colour: Colour can be used to make your subject stand out or blend in with the surroundings.

FIGURE 7.6.15 Natural light: Shape natural light with reflectors and subtractors to create dramatic effects.

FIGURE 7.6.16 Studio light: Continuous lighting in the studio can allow you to create dramatic, controlled effects.
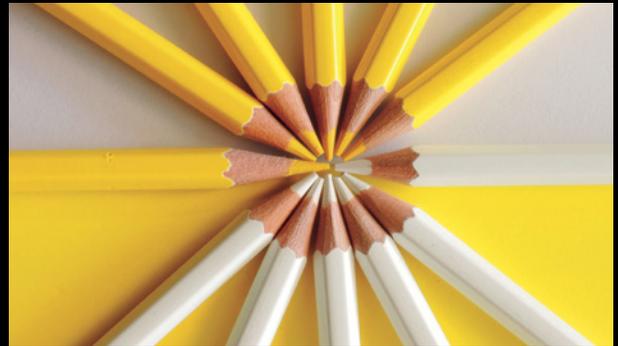
FIGURE 7.6.17 Contrast: Contrast using colour, light, shadow or patterns can emphasise elements in your frame.

FIGURE 7.6.18 Pattern: The repetition of patterns can be used to create striking images and, through contrast, attract attention to one part of the frame.

FIGURE 7.6.19 Camera angle: Consider how you can use overshots, high-angle, eye-level, low-angle and undershots to create visual interest within the frame.

FIGURE 7.6.20 Shot size: Your distance relative to the subject contributes significantly to the meaning of a shot. Consider how the shot size you use (extreme long shots all the way to extreme close-ups) contribute to your meaning.

FIGURE 7.6.21 Flash photography: Flash photography can be used both in the studio and with natural light to make the subject pop from the background.

CAMERA CHOICE

The advent of digital SLR and mirrorless cameras means that photographers now have the ability to experiment with a wide range of lenses to achieve particular effects. Fish-eyes are ultra-wide lenses that create hemispherical pictures. They are often used by sports photographers, particularly in skateboarding, to create dynamic and interesting pictures. Wide-angle lenses are often used in photojournalism because they emphasise the distance between objects and allow photographers to capture large panoramas. Wide lenses can cause fish-eye style distortion around the edges of the frame. Longer lenses, those between 70 mm and 105 mm, are frequently used for portraits because they make people's noses appear smaller. Prime lenses create crisp images, while zoom lenses are useful for covering live events and allow the photographer to zoom in on people or things.

PRODUCTION

While it is possible to take excellent photographs with the automatic settings of a camera, using the manual settings will ultimately give you greater control over your final images.

SHUTTER SPEED

The shutter speed determines the length of time the camera's shutter is open and how long light is permitted to enter the camera. On many digital SLR cameras, the shutter speed can be controlled quite precisely. Fast shutter speeds are useful for shooting fast-moving objects. Slow shutter speeds can be used to create motion blurs.

APERTURE

The aperture is the hole in a lens that light travels through. A wider aperture allows more light to enter a camera. The width of the aperture is measured in stops. The lower the f-stop, the larger the aperture is. An aperture of f/1.4 is larger than an aperture of f/8. A wide aperture with a slow shutter speed is used to create a very shallow depth of field.

WHITE BALANCE

Setting the white balance of a camera is an important step that contributes to taking a good photograph. If the image is too orange or blue, it is likely that the white balance on your camera is set incorrectly. On most cameras, white balance can be set for direct sunlight, overcast weather, and incandescent and fluorescent lights. Many cameras allow manual white balance by taking a photograph of a white card, which provides a digital reference for the lighting.

ISO

ISO determines how sensitive the camera is to light. Low film speeds, such as ISO 100, are generally recommended for use on bright, sunny days. High film speeds, such as ISO 1600, are ideal for low-light conditions. Typically, depending on your sensor, higher ISO creates increased grain in an image.

POST-PRODUCTION

Photo-editing software such as Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Lightroom and Apple Photos™ can be used to modify and adjust images after they have been taken. Before you start editing your photos, ensure that you make a copy of the original files and/or negatives. It is good practice to avoid saving over the original images; work on a copy instead. That way, if you encounter difficulties, you can always return to the original and start again.

Photo-editing programs often have automatic adjustment features that will improve the contrast and colour in most images. Using these automatic adjustments can be an effective way to quickly improve the overall look of the photograph. However, you can achieve more precise control over an image by adjusting the presentation levels manually.

During post-production, it is also a good idea to consider cropping your images. Sometimes, despite meticulous planning, the shot might be slightly wider than desired or not composed correctly. Cropping allows you to subtly change the framing of the photograph, for example, to comply with the rule of thirds. When performing operations such as cropping or straightening, it is important to keep in mind that these alterations can reduce the resolution of the photograph. Significantly cropping the photograph could mean that you reduce the quality of the print. Planning your shoot carefully means that such adjustments will only ever have a negligible effect on the quality of the image.

PRINTING

It is important to determine the printing specifications that are going to be most effective for your production. Ask yourself if you want to print on matte (not shiny) or gloss (shiny) paper. Consider what paper thickness will suit your images and how you will present your images. During the initial planning for your photography production, create a basic layout and experiment with the presentation methods, paper stock and printer options available to you.
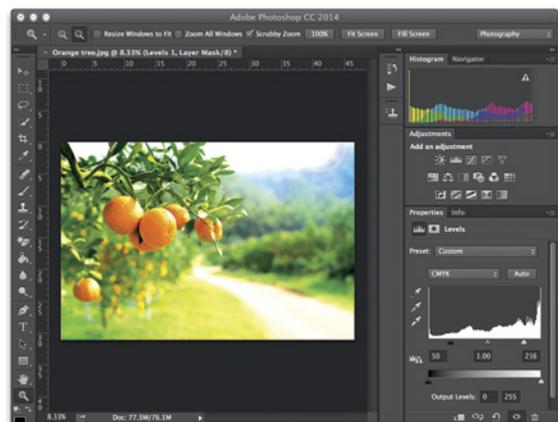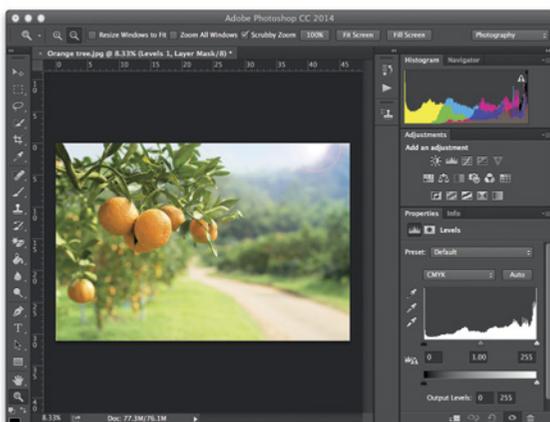
FIGURE 7.6.22 Adjusting the 'black point' (darkness) and 'white point' (lightness) in a photograph can result in a richer image with improved contrast.
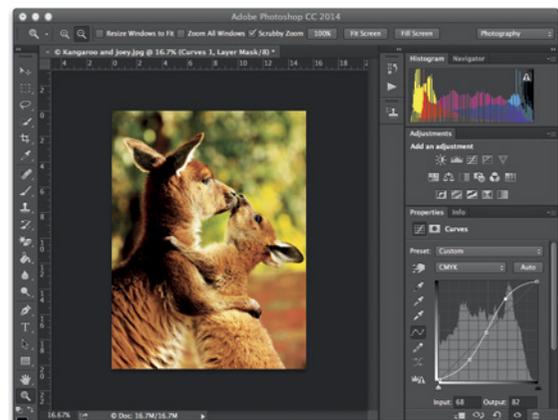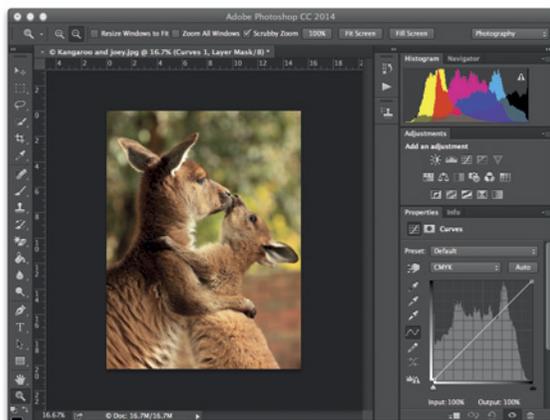
FIGURE 7.6.23 The curves tool of a photo-editing program alters the representation of the shadows, midtones and highlights in an image. Creating an S-curve is an effective method for making a flat image appear more dynamic.

7.7 Print

Students creating a print product are expected to produce a work of at least eight pages. The best way to clarify the scope of your project is to discuss potential ideas with your teacher. The production design plan will address codes and conventions, formats and processes appropriate to your intention, audience and media form.

THE PRODUCTION DESIGN PLAN

The production design plan may include:

- brainstorming
- research folio
- production exercises
- intention
- audience
- outline of content
- articles
- mock-ups
- scheduling documents
- codes and conventions and specifications appropriate to your genre and/or media form, such as: a description of style and/or genre, techniques of engagement, typography, layout, presentation (such as paper stock and method of printing) and visual material (such as photographs and illustrations)
- production notes.

RESEARCH PORTFOLIO

Once you have settled on an idea for your print production, you will need to complete your research portfolio. Your research portfolio will examine codes, conventions, narrative, genres and styles relevant to your production, making specific and detailed reference to how these techniques will be used in your print product. Here are ideas that you might use as starting points for your research.

- Analyse pages from similar print productions. If you are creating a fashion magazine, for example, you might annotate the pages to indicate important conventions you will adopt in your project.

- Identify the structure and style of writing from your selected genre. A glossy tourist brochure will be written in a very different manner to a current affairs magazine. Be specific about how you will use this structure and style in your own production.

- If you are creating a graphic novel, comic or storybook find prominent examples of these genres and comment on the structure of their narratives.

- Describe the style of photographs or illustrations included in your selected genre. Your description of these may be accompanied by annotated examples.

PRODUCTION EXERCISES

Following your research portfolio, you will undertake at least two production exercises to explore the technology, equipment and processes relevant to your selected style and genre of print production. Each of these exercises will be accompanied by documentation including an intention and evaluation. The best production exercises will be related to your research and proposed production, giving you the opportunity to explore the equipment and processes necessary to complete your project.

- If you are illustrating material for a magazine, graphic novel, zine or storybook, explore the materials you will use to create these illustrations and how they will be scanned, manipulated and included in the final product.

- Explore how to take photographs for your production. These tests might include an exploration of camera settings, lenses, lighting and flashes.

- Explore the features of your photo-editing software, including programs like Adobe Photoshop or Adobe Lightroom. You might, for example, learn how to use histograms, filters and other advanced features to manipulate photographs and images for your print publication.

- Explore the features of page layout programs such as Microsoft Publisher™, Adobe InDesign and Apple Pages™.

- Conduct tests to determine the most suitable printers and paper stock for your production. You may also test options for binding your product.

FIGURES 7.7.1 AND 7.7.2 The cover of a publication sets the tone and provides the reader with expectations about the content to follow.

MAGAZINES

Despite the rise of digital and online content, magazines, in a range of formats and styles, are still incredibly popular. They are also a popular choice for students creating their school-assessed task.

MASTHEAD AND COVER

The masthead, or title of your publication, is probably the most distinctive and important element of your print publication's cover. Experiment with the font type, size and weight, and the space between the letters until you end up with something that expresses the style of your magazine. Carefully consider the use of colour on the cover of your print product, ensuring that it is consistent with the overall style of your publication.

TYPOGRAPHY

If you are going to make an effective print product, you need to choose fonts that suit its style, content and format. Current affairs magazines are often extremely conservative in their use of typefaces to ensure that their typography is clean, consistent and easy to read. Using too many fonts can result in a design that is busy, cluttered and difficult to read.

FIGURE 7.7.3 Think carefully about the use of typography in your print product to create contrast and draw attention to particular words.

Heading The top part of the page and/or the title of the article

Drop cap The enlarged or elaborately decorated first letter of the body text

Margin The space around the printed matter on a page

Pull quote A quote or an extract lifted from the body text and set in a different, more visually striking font, to attract readers' attention

Body text The main text of the article, which can be set in columns

Bleed Design elements that extend to the end of the page and are placed to 'bleed' beyond the edge

Caption A title or description of the image shown nearby

Footer Repeated text or graphics at the bottom of the page (often contains the page number)

is still there. Despite her profile steadily rising and spreading like those balloons above, despite the fact that she was recently nominated for her first Gold Logie, Keddie is ready for a rest, and at this point is damn sure she's going to take one.

"I'm glad that I've recognised that I need to refuel a little bit," she acknowledges, laughing. "Yeah, I'm going to stop. I'm going away."

One [...] for K[...] an ex[...] ice building, the temporary headquarters of Offspring productions. Whoops and screams rise up from outside, where the crew are gathered in a circle playing hacky-sack.

After changing out of costume, the 36-year-old actor apologises (unnecessarily) for a short delay. She sits down on a sand-coloured, linen-covered couch. I sit on a chair. We talk about her childhood. The [...] like therapy.

[...] her mother, an English lit and [...] her after actress Jane Asher [...], after Charlotte and Emily), how [...] ysiology and anatomy, how the family lived in Sandringham and how she flung from being "painfully shy" to "craving attention".

"I think there was the desire to be approved of and noticed and recognised as I was growing up, which was the performer in me," she says, "and the other part of me was struggling from a very early age with conflicting emotions about being the odd one out."

Her uncle, film producer Richard Keddie, remembers the young Asher as an instinctive performer and copycat even as a five-year-old. "I remember I gave her a Christmas present and she

said, 'Thank you. That's so kind of you. You really shouldn't have'," he says. "She was a great play actor as a child." And then she was a great professional actor as a child, working on a handful of telemovies and miniseries from ages eight to [...] 12-week shoots in the outbac[...] adventure" but also "very lonely".

"I liked to think of myself as qu[...] fact is I was a little girl," Keddie say[...] room by myself for weeks on end [...] It would never happen now. I think [...] for some years with some guilt over that, but I was the sort of child who pushed and pushed to get what I wanted, and I didn't want to be told 'No'. I don't know that that part of me has changed that much."

Giving up acting and going to high school – a decision made by her parents – was a tricky adjustment after she had worked with a tutor for so long. Fitting into an academic and sports-focused baysid[...] switch to the co[...] Grammar Schoo[...] ace. Still, Keddie [...] able" as a teenager. "I really pushed it to the limit. I don't think I was quite as popular with my family then," she says. "Emotionally, I pushed as many buttons as I could. Looking back, I think I wanted people to be reactive, so that I could work out how to deal with them."

Her uncle, who produced the telemovies Hawke (in which Keddie played Blanche d'Alpuget) and Curtin (in which she played prime minister John Curtin's daughter) is more generous about her time as a hell-raiser, perhaps euphemistically referring to her "incredible spirit".

"She was such a close observer of others," he says. "I think she learned how to get through situations by remembering how she saw other people get

through them, which is an inte[...] an actor, isn't it?"

"It's probably not uncom[...] speculates. "To be an actor and [...] performance, you've got to be [...] wrestle with your emotions an[...] and I was certainly doing that a[...]

When she turned 18, she [...] adult agent, so she walked [...] Artists Management and foun[...] away with that?"), and then be[...] so far lasted almost 20 years, [...] productions with the MTC to a l[...] TV shows including State Coron[...] Guys Bad Guys, Janus, Stinge[...] The Secret Life of Us, Satisfac[...] and, of course, her breakout [...] Throughout that time, speci[...] endured (or cultivated) an emo[...] "troubled artist".

"I was really very much an [...] I wasn't all that keen on living in[...] what I wanted to do and I kn[...] achieve. Patience wasn't my [...] perhaps still isn't, but I'm gettir[...] just needed conflict. That seem[...] thing to say, but I think I needed[...] so that I could sort it out."

And then? Then around 30 [...] – of rejecting good opportu[...] fractious friendships or bad b[...] what I think it comes down to?[...] quite a lot of life experience a[...] late bloomer." And bloom she d[...] high-strung, strung-out Julia Ja[...] a turning a point in her life – [...] rewarding but personally liberat[...]

"I was really very much an escapist in my 20s, I wasn't keen on living in the present ... Patience wasn't my greatest strength and perhaps still isn't, but I'm getting better."

Asher Keddie "I think I was a late bloomer."

FIGURE 7.7.4 Common features found in print publications

FIGURE 7.7.5 Paragraph-style options and settings can be changed and refined in page-layout programs such as InDesign.

Contrast in typography can make your design appear dynamic and interesting. Magazines often have headings that use different weights of the same font. For example, part of a heading may be in Helvetica and the rest in a derivation of the Helvetica font type. By manipulating the font type, size, weight, colour and the case of the text (i.e. upper or lower) you can emphasise particular words of importance.

STYLES

It is important to think about how you are going to present the text in your print product; that is, the styles you will use to differentiate your content. Most page-layout programs allow you to create paragraph styles that set the parameters for the font type, size, weight, kerning and leading of your text.

Within any print publication you will have a range of styles for items such as body text, headings, subheadings, pull quotes and captions. Defining these styles before you become immersed in your design will make it easier to consistently format text as you go along.

Your print product should have a sense of consistency. Desktop publishing software, such as Adobe InDesign, allows users to create master pages. These master pages contain recurring features and styles and their use ensures that most of the pages in a publication carry a similar design. Aim to give every spread a sense of individuality, while maintaining an element of consistency throughout the publication.

BODY TEXT

It is vitally important that your text is legible. For example, it is usually not a good idea to place large amounts of text over a photograph, particularly if the image is complex, as it is likely to make the text almost impossible to read. If you are looking for a typeface that is simple and easy to read, you do not have to settle for the commonly used Times New Roman. There are a range of other attractive serif fonts that are noteworthy for their legibility, including Garamond, Baskerville, Georgia and Palatino. If you want to use a sans serif font, popular options include Arial, Helvetica, Tahoma and Verdana. As serif fonts are considered easier to read than sans serif fonts, you may want to use a serif font for the body text and sans serif fonts for other text styles, such as headings and captions.

Lorem ipsum is a type of filler text that dates back to the sixteenth century. It is frequently used by designers when creating page mock-ups as a text placeholder. There are several lorem ipsum text generators available online.

FIGURE 7.7.6 Think carefully about your use of body text. Font type, size and weight communicate a great deal about your publication and contribute significantly to its readability.

As well as thinking about the font choice for your body text, it is important to consider the leading. By default, most page-layout programs will set the leading to 120 per cent of the font size. So if your font is size 10, the leading will automatically be set to 12 points. Increasing the leading of your body text applies more space between the lines and can improve the legibility of your text.

COLOUR

Colours, and combinations of colours, communicate meaning and carry emotions.

Analogous colours are close to each other on the colour wheel and are pleasing to the eye. Complementary colours are direct opposites on the colour wheel; they are dynamic and when used together draw attention to themselves.

When you are planning mock-ups for your print product, take some time to think about your use of colour. You might start by creating colour swatches to see how the colours you intend to use work together. If a photograph is going to be used as the dominant feature of a design, think about using the eyedropper in your photo-editing software to select colours from the image that can be used for headings.

HIERARCHY

The size of the elements on a printed page often indicates their importance to readers. The heading and photograph(s) associated with a newspaper article are usually the largest and most dominant features of the design, followed by subheadings, body text and captions. Increasing the size of an image or part of the text gives these features greater prominence on the page.

ZINES

Zines are handmade magazines. You don't need software or even a computer to make a zine. All it takes is a black marker and a photocopier. In many ways, zines are a reaction to the glossy perfection of the mainstream magazine industry. They are lo-fi, underground publications that often feature messages of rebellion.

In the 1970s and 1980s, zines developed as a form of expression for the punk movement, and featured political commentary, music reviews and poetry. Punk zines were largely produced using everyday equipment including typewriters, photocopies and marker pens. They often appropriated and modified images from mainstream publications, promoting a do-it-yourself ethos encouraging ordinary people to make their own culture. The format and ethos of these punk zines was quickly adopted by other counterculture movements, including the feminist riot grrrl movement of the 1990s. These handmade, independent publications often explored ideas and themes neglected by the mainstream media.

The Sticky Institute is an independent organisation in Melbourne, Australia, that promotes zine culture. They provide people with equipment—such as typewriters, photocopiers and long-arm staplers—to create and sell their own zines. 'The Festival of the Photocopier' is an annual event that promotes zine-making in Australia.

FIGURE 7.7.7 Zine by Anji Bignell

FIGURE 7.7.8 Sticky Institute, Melbourne

PRINTING YOUR PROJECT

It is important to determine the printing specifications that are going to be most effective for your production. Ask yourself whether you want to print on matte or gloss paper and what paper thickness will suit your publication. Also consider how the product is going to be bound. During your production exercises, it is a good idea to create a basic layout and experiment with the binding, paper stock and printer options available to you.

PRODUCTION NOTES

When you are making your product, ideas often develop and evolve when you are in production. While completing the school-assessed task for VCE Media, you are expected to keep a record of these ideas and changes. These production notes demonstrate the learning that occurs when you are making your production and allow your teacher to authenticate your work. Production notes may take a range of forms. Some students have a dedicated production notebook that they write in while they're on location and editing their film. Other students will simply choose to keep the annotated screenplay and shot lists that they used while they were making the film. These documents will be added to your production design plan before submission, but must be clearly differentiated from the design plan itself. Unlike other subjects, such as Studio Arts, you are not expected to write a formal evaluation of your work. The production notes should be an authentic record of your production.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- When developing an idea, take the time to research and investigate the media form you are interested in.

- Audience is one of the most important considerations when planning a media production. Identify the knowledge, expectations and experience of your audience and remember to consider them throughout the production process.

- Successful media products require detailed written and visual planning documents. The planning documents should address how codes and conventions specific to the media form will be used.

- Before undertaking any media production, identify what you hope to achieve by clearly stating your aims in your intention.

- Undertaking production exercises that may, for example, involve experimenting with the use of technical equipment, is a good way to prepare yourself for your media production.

- Media production is a time-consuming process that requires sound organisational and production skills to create an engaging and polished product.

ASSESSMENT: RESEARCH PORTFOLIO AND PRODUCTION EXERCISES

RESEARCH PORTFOLIO

A research portfolio is a detailed investigation of codes, conventions, narratives, genres and/or styles relevant to your media production. Your portfolio will take the form of a written report that is accompanied by relevant reference material, such as stills, audio clips or video. Your discussion should be specific and detailed, commenting on how you will use this knowledge throughout the production process.

ASSESSMENT: PRODUCTION EXERCISES

Before you commence, it is important to develop relevant media production skills. Getting hands-on experience with the technical equipment and processes related to your chosen medium will allow you to develop the necessary skills to create your own media production, and be well-equipped to handle potential problems that may occur during the production process. These production exercises should evolve organically from your research portfolio.

For this course outcome, you are required to complete at least two production exercises with accompanying documentation. Your school will decide on the length and complexity of the tasks, which may be linked or separate. For example, you may decide to shoot a documentary interview for the first exercise, then edit it for the next exercise.

As you complete your production exercise, you are expected to record, document and evaluate your development of ideas and skills.

INTENTION

Whether you are exploring how to create a three-point lighting system for a stop-motion animation sequence or experimenting with the use of digital photography for a zine, you need to explain clearly what you intend to achieve from each media skills task.

When writing your intention, research the skills and techniques required to complete the production exercise. If you are practising how to shoot a dialogue-heavy film scene, for example, you should research and explain the technical and aesthetic knowledge required to successfully complete the task. Your intention should anticipate any problems that are likely to occur while undertaking your production exercise as well as any possible solutions.

EVALUATION

When you have completed each production exercise, carefully and critically evaluate what you have achieved with reference to your stated intention:

- Did you meet the aims as outlined in your intention?
- What have you learnt in the process of completing this media skills task?
- What would you do differently next time?
- Is there any other technical knowledge you need to acquire before beginning?

8 Agency and control

In the John Carpenter film *They Live* (1988), protagonist John Nada finds a pair of sunglasses that reveals a different reality. All the media surrounding him have secret subliminal messages to 'obey' and 'consume', while the general public are unaware of these messages or the disguised aliens that live among them.

This idea of a powerful media that is able to manipulate an audience without them knowing was a common fear in the early days of mass media and is still widely held today. Parents worry about the effect a violent video game may have on their children, and television stations need to think about how a news program is presented. With the prevalence of social media, digital platforms and user-generated content, more complicated issues of power and control arise. The question arises as to whether the media shapes your world or whether you have the power to shape it.

In this chapter, research and case studies will be used to explore the relationships between audiences and different forms of media, the forms of power that exist there, and the attempts that have been made to regulate these relationships.

In John Carpenter's *They Live* (1988), the media is used to control the human population.

8.1 Relationships: Audiences, producers and institutions

The relationship between audiences, producers and institutions is fundamental to media studies, including who may or may not have the power.

AGENCY AND CONTROL

Agency refers to the ability to act and make choices. When a media audience, producer or institution has agency, they feel they can use a medium or platform however they choose—to express themselves, to use the media for a specific purpose, or to communicate a message.

Control refers to the ability to exert power over somebody else's actions or choices. When a media audience, producer or institution has control, they may be able to shape messages or direct how the media is used.

Tension between these two ideas—agency and control— can be seen in many different audience relationships with the media. Many social media platforms sell the illusion of agency to an audience when, in fact, their use of the system is tightly controlled. In turn, some audiences enjoy subverting the systems of mediums or platforms to give themselves more agency. Media institutions are often fighting for more agency in how they interact with the different regulation systems that attempt to control them.
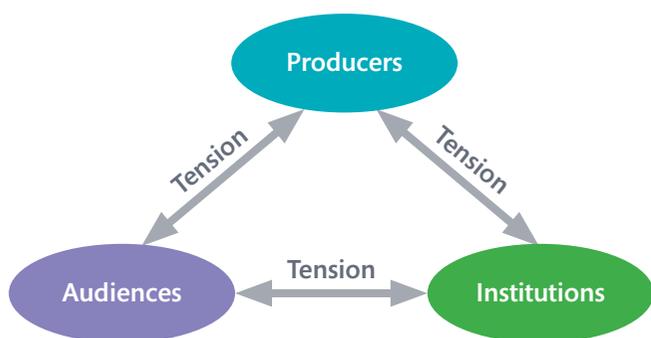
FIGURE 8.1.1 Tension exists between audiences, producers and institutions as they each attempt to claim agency and control over media texts.

This tension between agency and control is one way to explain the audience's relationship with the media, something that has changed dramatically over time. Think of the relationship your parents had with the media when they were teenagers. Before social media, television was the dominant form of media consumption. Your parents had little agency over the programs they watched. Their

choice of stations was perhaps five, and their content was always produced for a 'mass audience'. The television stations had significant control over what was shown and when. This control was tempered by the Australian government, which issued television licences so long as stations met certain regulatory conditions such as who owned the station, how much Australian content was shown and the time of day certain programs were broadcast.
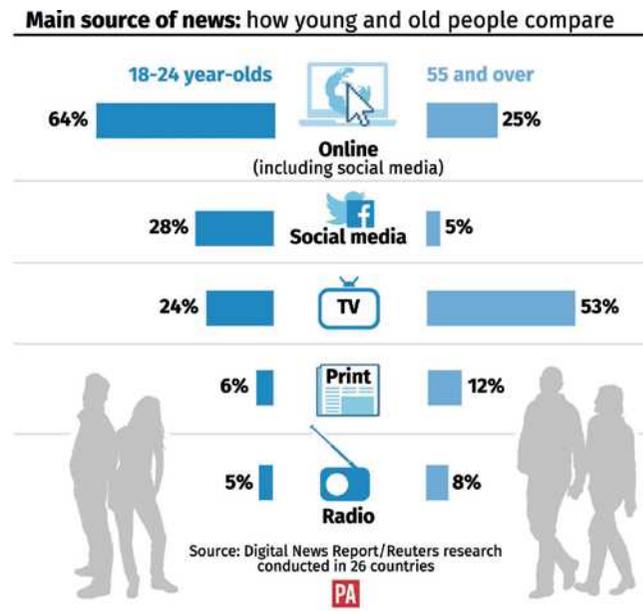
FIGURE 8.1.2 The change in how younger and older people get their news shows a move towards platforms that give consumers more agency.

Audiences now have significantly more agency over how their media is used. Instead of just five television channels to choose from, they have an almost unlimited choice of content, both on television and through a host of other mediums. With the advent of on-demand media platforms, audiences can also decide when they consume their programs. Audiences now actively engage with the media rather than being passive observers. Audiences have become producers of their own media stories through text, audio, photos and video. While you may feel like you have control over the production of your own media content

online, in fact, you are still controlled by the platforms in terms of content ownership, terms and conditions and the limitations of the platform itself.

AUDIENCES

The type of audience that a media product has can have a significant impact on its level of agency or control. When a society believes that some audiences are more 'vulnerable' to the media, steps are taken to protect them. For example, children are seen to be more vulnerable to media that may harm or disturb them—younger males are thought to be more vulnerable to media that may make them violent and younger females to images that may have an effect on their body image.

Some audiences are seen to have more agency over the use of their media than others. Digital natives (the generation that has grown up with connected technologies and the internet) are said to have more agency in digital spaces than older generations, as they have a greater understanding of the platforms and tools that are used. Others claim that socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds affect people's agency in the media space—there is debate as to whether the media is now free and open to all or whether such factors affect access to and use of these media platforms.

MEDIA INFLUENCE THEORIES

Ever since the advent of mass media, concern has been expressed about the relationship between audiences and the media they consume. Academics and researchers have developed a number of theories about this relationship. Many of the theories can be traced back to before the internet, sometimes before television, so it can sometimes be hard to see how they relate to contemporary media and audiences. However, it is important to understand them as often they are used to frame the discussion today, or new theories have evolved from them.

When reading about these different theories and ideas about media influence, keep in mind that there is no one 'correct theory' that is going to explain exactly what the relationship between the media and audience is. The relationship is complicated and constantly changing, such that it is virtually impossible to pin down any one idea. Taking note of when a theory developed or became popular can provide an insight into what was happening in the media at that time.

FIGURE 8.1.3 Certain media products can change the way that we understand the relationship between the media and audiences. David Lynch's *Twin Peaks* (1990) introduced the idea of 'cult' television to prime time, and changed the way media theorists understood audiences.

Learning activities

1   In your own words, define the terms 'agency' and 'control'.

2   What do you understand by the media terms 'producer', 'audience' and 'institution'? Give some examples of how the role of each one has changed over time.

3   Compare how your parents or another adult use the media with how you use the media. How is the tension between agency and control different in these cases?

4   Describe how you use a specific social media platform. How does the platform control how you use it?

5   Have you read the terms and conditions for the social media platforms you use? Choose a platform, read their terms and conditions, and list the rules it has about how you can and can't use the platform. Why do you think these rules exist?

8.2 Direct effect trend theories

There is no doubt that new media technologies can have an effect on society. As a new media technology grows in popularity, other social institutions are forced to change and the unknown quality of this technology can cause mistrust and unease.

DIRECT EFFECT THEORIES

Direct effect theories come from the idea that technologies such as newspapers, radio and film were promoting behaviours that were harmful or dangerous to individuals and society. Ultimately, these theories argue that the media has a large and powerful effect over vulnerable audiences, which must be controlled.

On the whole, the academic world has disregarded these direct effect theories, understanding that the relationship between audiences and the media is more complex than this. However, the debate about media influence is still often framed in this way with, for example, video games, social media and mobile technologies being blamed for a range of evils.

PROPAGANDA THEORY

After the First World War and in the lead-up to the Second World War, media theorists were especially worried about propaganda, a type of mass communication strategy of using the media to spread specific beliefs. Propaganda can be said to simplify a complex issue and repeat it over and over again. Harold Lasswell studied the use of propaganda in both world wars and devised his propaganda theory to try to explain its effectiveness.

> Harold Lasswell was an American political scientist and communications theorist. During the Second World War, he worked at the US Library of Congress as the director of war communications research. He was interested in the distribution of values in society and how they changed. A focal point of his work and analysis was power dynamics.

Lasswell believed that the effectiveness of propaganda was due to the audience being in an especially vulnerable state of mind, because of circumstances such as economic depression or political conflict. Lasswell argued that when the 'average' person found their life in disarray, they would turn to propaganda for comfort. In their vulnerable state, they were unable to rationally interact with this propaganda or develop counter-beliefs.
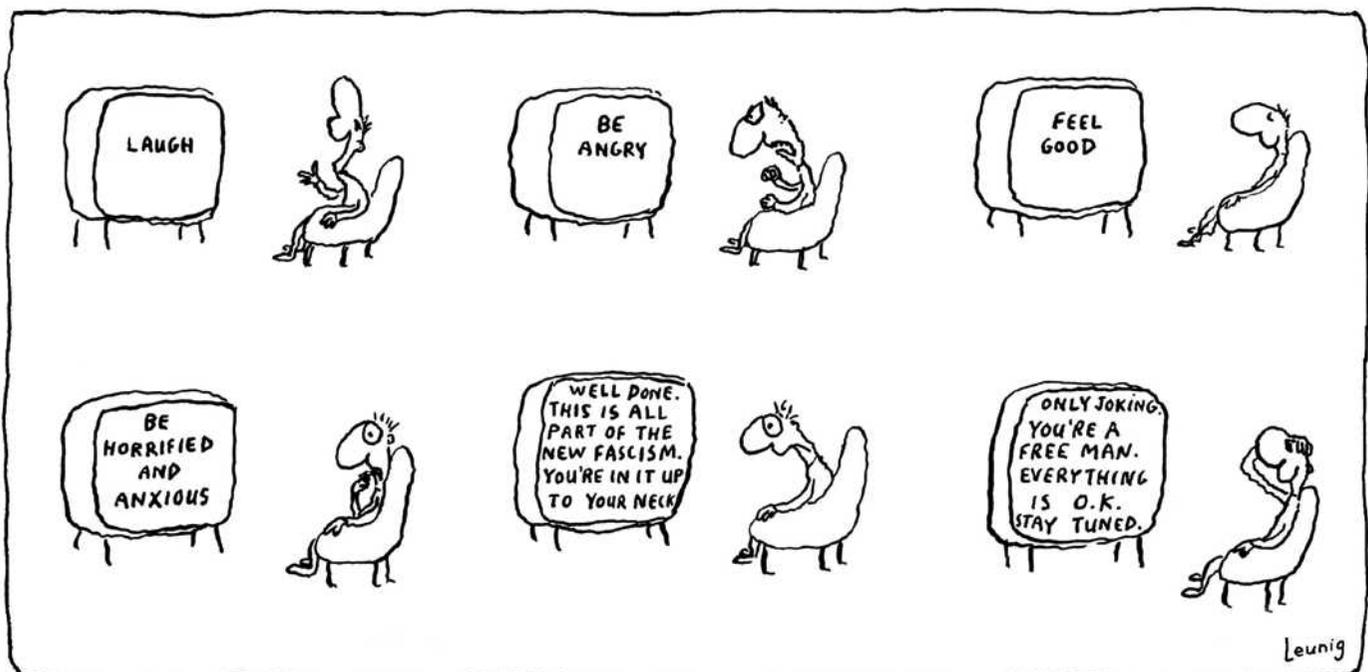
FIGURE 8.2.1 Michael Leunig cartoon. Direct effect theories are concerned with the powerful effect that the media is thought to have over vulnerable audiences.

Lasswell also believed that the power of propaganda was not in one-off messages, but in the continued and repeated use of symbols to represent emotions over a long period of time. He saw 'master symbols' as especially powerful when they were used simultaneously throughout a range of mediums, such as films, billboards, pamphlets, music and newspapers. He further thought that the only way to fight harmful propaganda was with good propaganda.

FIGURE 8.2.2 US Army Air Forces poster from the Second World War

AUSTRALIAN WAR PROPAGANDA

During the First World War, Australia produced numerous propaganda campaigns, mainly to help with the recruitment of soldiers (see Figure 8.2.3). The government tightly controlled the reporting of the war in the newspapers to ensure Australian soldiers were represented as brave and as doing their country proud. The recruitment film *Hero of the Dardanelles* (1915) was produced and screened just twelve weeks after the landing of Gallipoli and included a re-enactment of the landing, which was filmed at Tamarama Bay in Sydney.

FIGURE 8.2.3 An example of a recruitment poster from Australia during the First World War. The poster shows everyday Australian men signing up for the army because of a sense of duty to their country.

MODERN PROPAGANDA THEORY

Some theorists believe that people still live in a world of propaganda, but instead of the government sending out communication, it is largely through companies advertising their products. Think of how McDonald's™, Coca-Cola™ and Apple use their logos in their advertising. Often these symbols are attached to a simple emotion and are repeated in the media over a long period of time. Everyone knows what Coca-Cola is but still they advertise every day on television, radio, on billboards and all over social media.

Behavioural analysts and critics Richard Laitinen and Richard Rakos have been concerned that, as the ownership of the media is more concentrated than ever, only a very few points of view are being shared. As these media conglomerates are now so large, only the very rich can afford to own them, which leads to only certain points of view being expressed. They cite the example of Rupert Murdoch, who owns companies involved in the content production and distribution of film, television, newspapers, magazines, cable networks and internet platforms.

FIGURE 8.2.4 From billboards to our television screens, laptops and smartphones, advertising is impossible to escape.

Such large media conglomerates offer plenty of opportunities for cross-promotion. It is easy to see how a film produced by a certain company may end up having favourable reviews in certain newspapers, as well as blanket coverage in magazines and chat show appearances by the stars. In Australia, media concentration is among the highest in the world—the top media company in Australia controls over 29 per cent of the media overall. This is surpassed only in countries where the media is controlled by the government.

Theorists argue that with fewer points of view being expressed, audiences will have fewer points of references with which to understand the world. They also argue that if everybody is selling you something, the choice to not buy something is not available. You have the choice of Coca-Cola or Pepsi™, not neither.

Modern propaganda theory carries some of the same elements of the older version of propaganda theory, that the audience is passive and does not have the skills to critically analyse the media they see. Laitinen and Rakos saw audiences as being placed under attack by media conglomerates who use sophisticated survey techniques and create messages that are confusing and circular. Audiences are 'engulfed in a harried lifestyle, less

well-informed, and less politically involved'. Instead of propaganda that appeared to have its own reason and logic, today's propaganda consists simply as slogans and facts presented as reality.

Learning activities

1 Find a recent example in the news where it was claimed that the media was directly responsible for something that happened. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of this claim.

2 Examine the example of war propaganda aimed at an Australian audience in Figure 8.2.3 and analyse it for meaning. What is the message, or idea that the poster is trying to convey? How are technical codes used to achieve this?

3 Watch clips of the film *Hero of the Dardanelles*. Why do you think it was such an effective piece of propaganda at the time?

4 If the Australian Government were to produce war-time propaganda now to enlist soldiers, do you think it would work? Why/why not? What do you think this propaganda campaign would look like?

5 Think about the logos and symbols you see every day. What emotions do you attach to them, if any?

8.3 Limited effects trend theories

The limited effects trend of mass communication theories started after the Second World War. As certain new media technologies grew in popularity, researchers wanted to be able to scientifically prove the effects that they were having on society.

LIMITED EFFECTS THEORIES

Much of the research done in the direct effect studies took the form of content analysis, where the media texts themselves were examined to see the types of *messages* they may have been giving to their audience. Limited effects studies were more interested in identifying exactly what kind of *effects* the media was having on audiences.

The studies that formed part of the limited effects research were undertaken with scientific rigour. The findings were that the media had only a small and short-term influence on audiences. Theorists did not perceive audiences as powerless and highly susceptible to the effects of the media. They also recognised that the audience's relationship with the media involved factors such as social, educational and cultural institutions.

Limited effects theorists believed in scientific models, tests and research, seeing this as the only way that media influence could be 'proven'. Critics of this research model saw the difficulty of measuring media influence at all. Although limited effects researchers used a range of research methods, none were without their weaknesses.

FIGURE 8.3.1 The Kerrigan Family from *The Castle* (1997). Reinforcement theory suggests that people are more likely to be influenced by cultural factors such as family, than by the media.

REINFORCEMENT THEORY

Reinforcement theory came from one of the first studies to find that the media was not as powerful as previously thought. Joseph Klapper developed this theory in his 1960 publication, 'The Effects of Mass Communication'. Reinforcement theory claims that the media has little power to influence audiences as they seek out media texts that agree with their pre-existing beliefs. The theory states that 'socialising agents' such as peer groups, education and family help people to create their beliefs and that they consume media that corresponds with our views and doesn't make us uncomfortable.

Klapper claimed that, mostly, the media had little influence over its audience at all and that it was mostly there to maintain the status quo. However, he made one exception. Audience members may be vulnerable to influence if a media text presents an idea that they have not come across before.

The reinforcement theory seems to have some relevance today. Nobody likes to think that they can be manipulated by the media and, with the vast number of choices available, would be unlikely to choose anything that made them uncomfortable. One of the issues with applying Klapper's theory to today, though, is that it was conducted around political speeches on the radio and newspaper articles in the 1940s and 1950s—before the introduction of television. Today, the media is so all-encompassing that it is easy to believe that people would experience most ideas through film, television and social media networks, before they were encountered from families or friends.

AGENDA-SETTING THEORY

Agenda-setting theory is the idea that the media cannot tell people what to think, but it can tell them what to think about. This theory was in evidence in the 1920s, but was first named by Max McCombs and Donald Shaw in a study into how the news affected voting around the time of the 1968 US presidential election.

The idea behind agenda-setting theory is that the media can have a powerful effect over what people think are important issues through outlets such as newspapers, talkback radio and the evening news. Audiences often regard what is 'important' news as that which appears at the start of a news bulletin or on the front page of the

FIGURE 8.3.2 Agenda-setting, priming and framing theories suggest that the news media has the power to influence what we think about and how we think about it, on many topics such as climate change.

newspaper. Audiences may have their own opinions about these issues, but these are the issues that will be discussed within social networks.

Traditionally, the agenda was set by newspaper editors who sent their front pages to other news outlets the night before they went to press, which led to news reports and talkback radio sections the next day, within a 24-hour news cycle. Internet platforms have made these feedback loops occur within a shorter timeframe. With the rising interest in celebrity news and gossip, it is often up to public relations experts to understand and control the 'news cycle' by releasing information at key times hoping to get exposure or to avoid it.

With social media, agenda setting is thought of even more broadly. Both Twitter and Facebook have 'trending' topics, or those that are most popular on their sites at a certain time and will give precedence to user posts that are linked with these trends. The traditional media and news outlets often pay close attention to these online trends. It could be said that the audience is now setting the agenda, instead of the media.

Of course, the relationship is never that simple, as the question arises as to how the audience came to be aware of the trend in the first place. Some argue that the traditional media still holds a powerful agenda-setting role.

PRIMING THEORY

Where agenda-setting theory is about how we receive information from the media, priming theory relates to what audiences do with that information. Coming from the world of psychology, and research done around the views of US presidents, priming theory states that the media has an effect on people's future judgements or behaviours. Priming theory is often discussed in the context of news media and agenda-setting theory. In the research done around the US presidents, it was found that the issues covered by the news media affected whether the audience thought the president was doing a good job. Priming has also been studied in terms of violent media and subsequent violent behaviour. Studies have shown that audiences often show more aggressive tendencies after viewing or playing violent media. However, an important aspect of priming theory is that studies have only ever been able to show the short-term effects of viewing media. Many studies have found that the effects last no longer than an hour.

FIGURES 8.3.3 AND 8.3.4 The story of homelessness in Melbourne's CBD is presented differently in *The Age* [left] and the *Herald Sun* [right].

FRAMING THEORY

The premise of framing theory, often discussed in relation to news media, is that the media presents and focuses on a story in a particular way that has an effect on how audiences will understand it. News media needs to present the news in such a way that it makes sense to audiences, so they will create a narrative frame and a point of view around each story. They use such tools as placing the stories in a hierarchy (what is thought of as most important will be at the top or at the front), selection, omission, and creating characters (deciding who is the 'good guy' and who is the 'bad guy').

It has been claimed that some news organisations frame their news in a way that reflects a certain political view. The ABC is said to be a left-leaning organisation, while Fox News™ in the USA is said to frame the news from a conservative viewpoint. According to framing theory, these two organisations will tell the same news story in different ways, with different protagonists and antagonists. In Melbourne, the two main newspapers *The Age* and the *Herald Sun* frame news stories differently, as shown in the way they reported on homelessness in Melbourne's CBD in 2017 (see Figures 8.3.3 and 8.3.4).

CULTIVATION THEORY

Cultivation theory came from the research of George Gerbner who was specifically looking at the effects of violent television in the 1980s. Cultivation theory developed out of a major study into the long-term effects of media and argues that these are far greater than those found in other limited effects studies.

Gerbner conducted a content analysis of violence on television and research on those that watched significant amounts of television. He argued that television violence had a cumulative effect on audiences, who came to believe that the world around them was a more violent place than it actually was. Gerbner claimed that television had the same level of influence that the Catholic Church used to have in how people see the world. However, Gerbner's research is flawed because it relies on correlation rather than causation. It could also be argued that people who think the world is more violent could be seeking out more violent shows on television.

Cultivation theory was most concerned with television in the 1980s and 1990s and so could not have considered the complicated media world of today. However, people's consumption of media and for some, violent media, has only increased since then. More violent television, video games, films and news imagery is available to anyone who wants it. The question remains as to whether the consumption of violent media makes more people think the world is more violent or whether people who think the world is this violent seek out this type of media.

FIGURE 8.3.5 *Calvin and Hobbes* comic. Cultivation theory looks at the effect of exposure to violent media over a long period of time.

Learning activities

1 Draw a diagram that explains cultivation theory. Describe it to a family member or friend who isn't studying media.

2 Who is most often the instigator of violence in media texts?
   • How are these people usually represented?
   • Write an analysis about how a certain group of people are represented over a range of violent media texts, and the effect that this representation might have.

FOMO

Think about how you represent yourself on social media and what kind of story you are telling your own audience. Usually social media users are framing their story with them as the protagonist, highlighting positive moments in their life to show how successful and happy they are.

It has been said that this hyper-version of framing on social media has led to the effect of 'FOMO' or 'fear of missing out'. On social media, people may share a considerable proportion of their lives, such as the holidays they go on, social events and major milestones. When people view social media, they are usually in their private sphere—at home and by themselves. This can create the impression that when people are home alone, the rest of the world is out enjoying themselves.

In 2013, researchers at the University of Essex undertook studies into the idea of FOMO and found that the more participants used social media, the more they felt FOMO. They also found that people who scored highly for FOMO often scored low for autonomy, competence and connectedness in their daily lives. What the research could not clarify is what came first. So the question remains as to whether people who use social media frequently get FOMO, or whether people with FOMO use social media more.

FIGURE 8.3.6 Mo Welch cartoon. 'FOMO' is about constantly comparing your real life to others' digital lives.

8.4 Cultural studies trend theories

As new media technology grows in popularity, theorists are also interested in the audience part of the equation, both as individuals and as larger social groups.

CULTURAL STUDIES THEORIES

Cultural studies looks at how individuals and social groups use the media to structure their everyday lives and how the media and audiences work in a broader sense as cultures and institutions. While limited effects studies were mostly concerned with the effects of certain types of media texts on audiences, cultural studies theories explore the role of the audience in terms of its relationship with the media.

Cultural studies theories and concepts are quite difficult to underpin with laboratory tests as they often involve complex relationships. The evidence used for cultural studies theories deals more with identifying and classifying how individuals and social groups use the media, and generally use qualitative methods of research such as interviews, observation and case studies.

When cultural studies theories started to rise in popularity in the 1970s, many scholars of the limited effects trend were quick to scoff at them, regarding them as unscientific. However, cultural study theorists claimed that the media had become so ingrained in our culture that it had become impossible to disconnect the effects of media from other cultural phenomena.
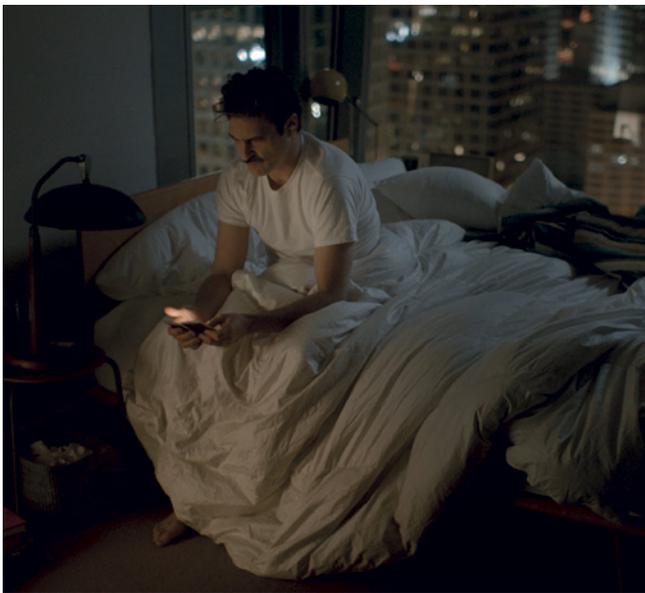
FIGURE 8.4.1 Joaquin Phoenix interacts with a new media technology in Spike Jonze's *Her* (2013). The cultural studies trend of media theories explores how audiences use media and its technologies.

THE FRACTION OF SELECTION

Many of the modern cultural studies theories stem from the uses-and-gratifications approach, which began in the 1940s. This approach focused on how audiences selected media products to meet certain needs. In the 1954 textbook *The Process and Effects of Mass Communication*, author Wilbur Schramm explored the question of why audiences choose to consume certain media texts over others. He came up with the fraction of selection:

$$\frac{\text{Expectation of reward}}{\text{Effort required}}$$

FIGURE 8.4.2 Schramm's 'fraction of selection'. When choosing a media text to consume, the audience weighs up its expectation of the reward against the effort required to consume it.

Schramm's claim through this model was that audiences decided to consume a particular media based on whether they believed that the required effort to be worth the reward in terms of how good or valuable the media product would be. Think about the media texts you consume and ask yourself whether you have ever watched a movie just because it was on television. There may have been other films you knew you would enjoy more, but the effort to track it down might not have been worth it. Or, it might be that you skipped a foreign language film because you thought that reading the subtitles involved too much work.

Newer media companies try to make using their platform as easy as possible. The autoplay functions on Netflix and YouTube are good examples of this. They can help you choose what to watch next and you don't even have to press the 'play' button. Facebook and Twitter's endless scrolling feature means never having to press the 'next page' button. Television stations have relied on this principle for years. Don't worry about trying to find your remote, because they have a good show coming on right after this one.

Sometimes the expectations of the reward are so strong that they are worth the effort required. The films that you watch in your media class might be more complex or harder to read than normal, but the end goal of passing

the subject may be worth that effort. Similarly, the newest comic book film might be getting really good reviews so it is worth going to the cinemas for. Or, a new social media platform's features might be interesting enough for you to go through the hassle of signing up for it.

The fraction of selection model is easy to apply to current media platforms that promise amazing experiences through intuitive user interfaces, but it does have its limitations. The fraction of selection theory fails to explore the different types of 'rewards' that audiences are seeking, and why they are seeking them. It also reduces audiences to risk-averse and effort-minimising individuals, always looking for the easiest option.

Think of that comic book film you saw at the cinema. How you understood or enjoyed that film was dependent on your active involvement and understanding of it. You might have been hoping for great action scenes with big explosions, because you know the director has done that in their past films and you enjoyed it. However, your friend might have been a fan of the comics and was confused when the film had a slightly different storyline. Another friend was just disappointed that the female character was not in it much even though she featured quite strongly in the trailer. Each person has had a different reading and reaction to the same text based on some prior expectations and understandings that they had.

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Learning activities

1 Consider how the fraction of selection theory applies to an audience member in the 1940s and an audience member today.
   • Describe what has changed in terms of the expectation of reward in media texts as well as the effort required to consume them.
   • Explain how these changes may have affected the validity of this theory.

2 Analyse three different media texts you have consumed in the last week in regard to the fraction of selection. In what way did the expectation of reward outweigh the effort required to consume it?

3 Discuss a media text over the past week that you didn't consume. How did the effort required outweigh the expectation of reward?

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FIGURE 8.4.3 Henry Cavill in *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice* (2016). Active audience theory states that different audiences would interpret this film in different ways.

ACTIVE AUDIENCE THEORY

Active audience theory states that when individuals consume a media text they are not just blindly accepting the message, but are intellectually engaging with it, which gives them some agency and control over it. This can happen on several different levels. One way an audience can be active is through interpretation. Active audience theory claims that media texts are polysemic, in that there is not one fixed meaning, but multiple ones. An active audience brings their own wants, needs and understandings to a text and uses these to make meaning from it.

There is also the social context in which an active audience interprets a film. You might discuss the film you just saw in the theatre with your friends, which adds to your understanding of the text. Or you may use social media platforms to discuss the film with others. It is also possible that you might engage with other types of media about the film. IMDb will give you extra information about who made the film, while Rotten Tomatoes will give you reviews. All of this adds to your interpretation.

ENCODING/DECODING MODEL

Part of reception studies coming out of the UK in the 1970s, and led mainly by Stuart Hall, encoding/decoding theory is interested in how audiences make sense of polysemic texts. Hall argued that media producers design media texts to hold certain ideological meanings, which the audience then decides how to read.

Media producers encode their preferred readings into their texts using the technical codes and conventions of the medium they are working in.

Hall also believed that audiences could decode these technical codes in the following ways, because of their own personal, cultural and historical backgrounds:

■ Dominant reading: The reader accepts the preferred reading so the codes and conventions seem natural and transparent.

■ Negotiated reading: The reader mostly accepts the preferred reading, but will make modifications to it so it reflects their own personal, cultural and historical understandings.

■ Oppositional reading: The reader's personal, cultural and historical understandings are so different from the producer's that they reject the preferred reading.

The encoding/decoding model is different from active audience theory in that it recognises that the media text has a preferred meaning. Hall saw media readings as two separate processes: the producer encodes a message into a text and the audience decodes it. Both processes allow for lots of opportunities for the text to be misread. The producer may misrepresent part of her message or the audience may have a certain cultural background,

FIGURE 8.4.4 *Summer Heights High* (2007). Consider the ideological input from series creator, Chris Lilley, and then how the audience decides to read it.

which means they would read the symbols differently than intended. Hall also argued that, even if the audience understood the codes and the message embedded in the text, that wouldn't necessarily mean they would agree with them.

Encoding/decoding gives audiences a middle point between two extremes: it understands that the audience has agency in that they are active in the way they read a media text, but also that the media has some level of control that enables it to present a powerful message. Critics of encoding/decoding theory argue that the three types of reading—dominant, negotiated and oppositional—are too restrictive and assume the understanding or recognition of a preferred message.

MEDIUM THEORY

Media scholar Marshall McLuhan is most famous for his statement, 'The medium is the message'. McLuhan argued that it is not what you say in the media that is most powerful, but rather the technology you use to say it. He saw that media technologies could have powerful effects on societies, and that they could become extensions of our own human senses. McLuhan claimed this in the 1960s when television was growing to be immensely successful and widespread. McLuhan saw the rise in popularity of the television as a significant change in how we communicate as a culture. He saw that visual literacy was becoming more important than text-based literacy.

Think about how a football match is seen through the media. Before the advent of the television, football fans needed to wait until the next day to read about the important parts of the game in the newspaper. In the 1990s, the football match would be mediated through a television broadcast, where the viewer needed to understand a different set of codes and conventions. Now, there are numerous additional ways that an audience can follow a football match, from internet streams to Twitter hashtags and Facebook updates. These mediums all have a different effect on how society interacts with the sport.
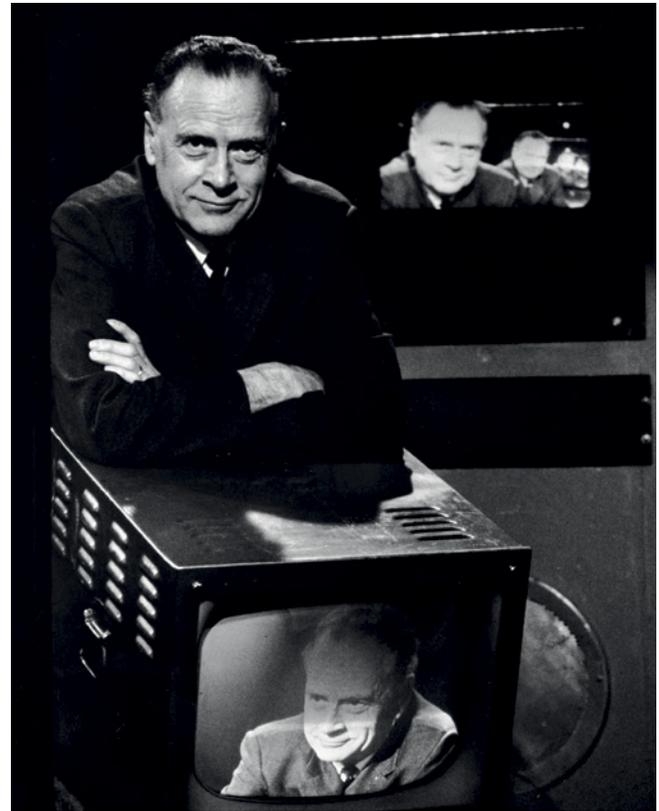
FIGURE 8.4.5 Canadian author Marshall McLuhan, who was famous for claiming 'The medium is the message'.

It is interesting to think about medium theory in the context of how people use the media today. When you use social media, often the platform is more important than the message you wish to convey, whether that be via Facebook, Snapchat, WhatsApp™ or Instagram. The ways to send the message are endless, but each one has its own set of rules and symbolic meanings. It is interesting to think about how these methods of communicating differ from sending an SMS, email, postcard or a note passed in class.

THE FILTER BUBBLE

The filter bubble is the argument that the internet's personalisation tools isolate us from opposing viewpoints. Coined by Eli Pariser in 2011, this theory has recently grown in popularity as more media platforms try to give people what they want but maybe not everything they need. In his book, *The Filter Bubble: What the Internet Is Hiding from You*, Pariser argues that people are all living in their own information universe where they mainly receive news that is familiar and that confirms their beliefs. People's past actions, with regard to the media they consume, will determine what kind of news they are given in the future, which leaves less room for creativity and democratic thought.

> More and more, your computer monitor is a kind of one-way mirror, reflecting your own interests while algorithmic observers watch what you click.
>
> Eli Pariser, *The Filter Bubble: What the Internet is Hiding from You*

Ever since the 1940s and the invention of reinforcement theory it has been argued that, at least to some extent, people choose media texts that align with their values. However, Pariser argues that the internet has introduced three new dynamics:

- You are alone in it: Your filter bubble is for one person only. Before the internet, even audiences of relatively obscure media texts shared some interests. Now your Facebook news or Instagram feed is specifically tailored to you.

- The filter is invisible: You may not realise that if you and a friend did a Google search for the same term you would get different results. That is because Google is making assumptions about what you want based on the information it has been able to get about you. You would have no way of knowing whether Google is using correct assumptions about you. Google, as well as platforms such as Facebook and Instagram order posts based on a secret algorithm.

- There is no choice but to enter the bubble: When you decide to read a certain newspaper, you are making a choice about what type of news you want to read. When using certain media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram or Google, you cannot prevent them from collecting information about you and tailoring the information that you receive.

Sometimes people welcome personalisation, especially when they are inundated with so much information every day. However, it is important to ensure that you are getting different points of view from the media that you choose.

2016 US ELECTION CAMPAIGN

An example of the filter bubble at work was during the 2016 US election. During the campaign, the country had become so polarised that news coverage and Facebook feeds created very different narratives for Clinton and Trump supporters. This occurred to such an extent that Trump's victory came as a surprise to many who only saw shared articles and polls that had Clinton winning the election easily.

Their Facebook feeds had become an echo chamber, where their friends only shared stories that agreed with their values. Each click on a news story just made the echo chamber louder and smaller.

FIGURE 8.4.6 Pantsuit Nation, a private Facebook group of over three million members. Facebook uses information such as group memberships to decide which type of news to show in your newsfeed.

Learning activities

1. Explain the filter bubble in your own words. In your opinion, what are its strengths and weaknesses?

2. Do a Google search on a simple term such as 'fast food' on your computer and compare your results with those of a friend. Are the results different again if you do the search on your phone?

3. Reflect on the different ways you receive information, news and current affairs.
   - What type of filter bubble do you have?
   - Are there ways that you ensure you get different viewpoints of the world that you might not agree with?

CONVERGENCE CULTURE

An idea that applies to newer media platforms is 'convergence culture', which sees media as a kind of melting pot of new and old media, different platforms, and the active participation of consumers. Communication theorist Henry Jenkins sees convergence culture as a kind of struggle for agency and control between large corporate media companies and its audiences. Jenkins writes:

> Media companies are learning how to accelerate the flow of media content across delivery channels to expand revenue opportunities, broaden markets, and reinforce viewer commitments. Consumers are learning how to use these different media technologies to bring the flow of media more fully under their control and to interact with other consumers.

MEDIA CONVERGENCE

Media conglomerates now have the power to send messages out via a range of different platforms, necessitating that different media industries work together. Think of *The Bachelor*. Although it is primarily a television show, it also can be streamed through Channel 10's website or episodes can be bought from the Apple platform. Additionally, it is advertised through a range of different media platforms and radio, magazines and newspapers. The producers also use social media platforms to create interest in the show by creating Facebook fan pages and Twitter hashtags. Audiences can decide how they want to experience and interact with the show through the different platforms. They may use the hashtag on Twitter to engage with the community through tweets, add their thoughts to Instagram, join a Facebook group or create a meme based on their favourite or least favourite character.

PARTICIPATORY CULTURE

Participatory culture is the idea that the audience is no longer a passive audience member. They are not only actively involved in the understanding of media texts, but have become media producers themselves. Jenkins sees that the term 'consumer' and 'producer' no longer apply—they are participants who interact with each other—although the media corporations still have more power over the audience.

Jenkins uses the term 'collective intelligence' to discuss a type of 'social economy', the idea that as individuals, people know a little, but as collective social networks, they know a lot. Jenkins sees this as a new type of media

power. For instance, theories about the outcomes of *The Bachelor* can come from the strong social ties of fans and producers, as audience members deconstruct advertising, comb through social media profiles and use other social connections.

PARASOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Consider whether you have friends on social media whom you have never met in real life, or whether you have ever liked a celebrity's Facebook page, followed them on Instagram or sent them a message via Twitter. If you answered yes, then you are in a parasocial relationship.

Parasocial relationships were first defined in the 1950s, in an article by Horton and Wohl (1956), as the apparent and one-sided interaction that can occur between media characters and their audiences. The researchers looked at the relationship between audiences and media celebrities such as radio personalities and television show hosts. They found that the use of certain technical codes added to a sense of realism and appeared to deepen a sense about these relationships on behalf of certain audiences. Who has not thought that they connected with and really knew a fictional character on television, especially one with whom they might have grown up?

PARASOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Now, with social media platforms, parasocial relationships are seen as a marketing tactic to grow celebrity brands. With the rise of reality television and social media celebrities, the pretence of a relationship between a media personality and their audience has become stronger than ever. Reality television stars, musicians, athletes, socialites and social media influencers all use social media platforms to achieve a closer relationship with their fans. They do this partly by presenting more personal, 'behind-the-scenes' moments to make them seem more relatable.

FIGURE 8.4.7 Oscar Isaac takes photos with fans. Fans often feel like they 'know' celebrities personally.

However, these relationships still rely on constructed media representations. They may be created by the personalities themselves or by the large public relations companies behind them, but they are all deliberately selling the notion that you will feel closer to these characters than ever before. These interactions are still largely one way. Besides some audience metrics, celebrities still know very little about their fans.

Horton and Wohl saw parasocial relationships as a negative effect of the media, taking advantage of vulnerable, lonely audiences. More recent studies into these relationships see that they have a place in our culture. Just like you choose your regular relationships, you choose your parasocial ones. Audiences choose these celebrities in an act of identity-building and willingly enter into a parasocial relationship, despite the fact that they are mostly one way. They receive the outcomes of the relationship either way.

Learning activities

1   Draw a diagram showing your understanding of parasocial relationships.
    - What leads to the imbalance in the relationship?
    - Describe this diagram to a family member or friend who isn't studying media.

2   Interview somebody who is in a parasocial relationship with a celebrity.
    - What do they know about the celebrity?
    - How close to them do they feel?
    - How often do they check up on them through social media feeds?
    - Evaluate whether this is a healthy relationship to be in.

3   Conduct an analysis of how a celebrity uses social media platforms to encourage parasocial relationships. What codes and conventions do they use to impart 'personal' information about themselves? What social media platform do you think is the most successful at this?

8.5 Media influence research and evidence

The limited effects trend in mass communication theories saw an explosion in scientific research in the area of media influence. From them, theories have been used to evaluate the relevance of research claims.

RESEARCH AND EVIDENCE

With the cultural studies trend of media influence theories, the research moved away from scientifically rigorous studies towards research that attempted to see a bigger picture than these studies would allow. When analysing the research associated with theories and issues around media influence, it is important to understand the type of researches that were being done and their strengths and weaknesses. It is also important to assess the validity of this research as theories may have developed that ignored certain findings.

CORRELATION AND CAUSATION

One requirement for analysing media effects research is knowing the difference between correlation and causation. It is easy to prove a correlation between two phenomena, such as the fact that people who watch a higher amount of violent media are more likely to show real-world violent tendencies. What is harder to prove is the causation; that is, whether the violent media is a direct cause of the violent tendencies.

CONTENT ANALYSIS

Content analysis was popular in the direct effects trend theory of thinking about media influence. Content analysis methods concentrate on the media texts themselves and what they are made of. A popular version of content analysis research is to count the amount of violent acts or types of representations in a certain text or texts. A 1995 study by Boyatzis, Matillo and Nesbitt into the effects on children's behaviour of them watching *Power Rangers* (see Figure 8.5.1) found that there were 140 aggressive acts in the half-hour episode that was examined. One of the first large studies into the effects of the media was the Payne Fund studies, which ran from 1929 to 1932. This study was primarily focused on understanding the effects that movies had on children and included a content analysis of over 1500 films. The studies reported that nearly three-quarters of the films featured crime, sex and love as central plotlines. Further studies expressed concern over the amount of films with sexually aggressive females and onscreen kissing.

Content analysis research can provide interesting data about the type of media being produced at a certain time and place, or how media has changed. It can be effective when it is used as part of a larger understanding of media influence. The weakness of content analysis research is that it is disconnected from the audience that consumes it. Content analysis presumes that the audience is passive or it does not explore the audience at all.

LABORATORY STUDIES

Laboratory studies in the media attempt to use laboratory conditions to explore a specific aspect of the relationship between a media text and its audience. Theorists and researchers in the limited effects trend favour laboratory studies because they can control all the variables in a test to see how a person may act or react to a stimulus.

Laboratory studies are popular with researchers when trying to understand the effects of violent media on audiences. For example, a 2006 study by Iowa State University found that subjects who played violent video games for twenty minutes had lower physiological responses when they watched videos of real-life violence. The claim of desensitisation to violence was measured through heart rate and galvanic skin response, which measures perspiration.

While laboratory studies are popular among limited effects theorists, they do have their weaknesses. It is argued that laboratory studies are conducted in artificial environments where people are not comfortable and may not act naturally. They can also only look at the immediate and short-term effects of the media.

LONGITUDINAL STUDIES

In longitudinal studies, researchers attempt to look at the relationship between media texts and audiences over a longer period of time and in a more naturalistic setting outside the laboratory. Longitudinal studies may involve researchers checking in with people over a period of weeks, months or years.

FIGURE 8.5.1 *Power Rangers*, Season 1 (1993–1996). A 1995 study identified 140 aggressive acts in one half-hour episode.

A study that went over fifteen years looked at the effect of television violence on 500 individuals (Huesmann, Moise-Titus, Podolski, & Eron, 2003). The study, which followed children from first grade into their twenties, found that heavy exposure to television violence in childhood predicted increased physically aggressive behaviour in adulthood, and that they were three times more likely to be convicted of criminal behaviour.

Longitudinal studies encourage a more in-depth understanding of the relationship between the media and audiences. However, there are some issues in separating the influence of media from that of other factors such as IQ, parental relationships and social class.

QUANTITATIVE STUDIES

Quantitative research is a technique that involves the use of numbers and statistics to understand the relationship between the media and its audience. Often the surveys or questionnaires that are used to collect this information contain only a limited number of responses to choose from. Quantitative studies helps researchers to easily categorise opinions, but do not always allow for more complicated answers.

An example of a quantitative study was that done by the Girl Scout Research Institute in 2011 on the relationship between girls aged eleven to seventeen and reality television. Some of the findings in the survey-based study were that regular reality television viewers accept and expect a higher level of aggression and bullying in their own lives, are more focused on the value of physical appearance, and are more confident and self-assured.

As well as being a narrow focus into a subject, the findings of quantitative studies can be easily manipulated or inaccurate, due to the way questions are asked, the number of people involved with the research and who the subjects are.

QUALITATIVE STUDIES

Qualitative studies use similar tools to quantitative studies such as surveys and interviews. However, qualitative studies involve more open-ended questions. This can allow for a more well-rounded understanding of relationships with the media, but it can be difficult to specifically state what the relationship is for a large number of people. This is because qualitative studies often take more time and resources, meaning the sample number of participants is generally smaller when compared with quantitative studies.

FOUND DATA OR CASE STUDY RESEARCH

Found data or case study research involves looking at data that already exists in the world and studying what this may mean in terms of the media effects or relationships involved. This type of research may be the least scientific, but often society turns to theories based on a real-world event to try to make sense of why that event occurred.

An example of a found data study is one done by the University of Maryland in 2015, which found that access to *Sesame Street* in the early 1960s led to improved early educational outcomes for children. This study used data that compared households that had access to *Sesame Street* with those that didn't, due to whether or not they had television reception. The researchers linked this data to how the children in those households performed as shown in their elementary school results. The study found that living in an area with strong television reception reduced the likelihood of the children's school results being under the grade-level appropriate for their age.

FIGURE 8.5.2 Oscar the Grouch is happy with the found data research that suggests watching *Sesame Street* leads to better educational outcomes.

EVALUATING MEDIA INFLUENCE EVIDENCE

A range of evidence is used to support claims of media influence, from personal anecdotes to scientific research and case studies. When evaluating these claims, use the NEAT-O approach.

- Nature: What is the nature or type of influence that this claim is suggesting? Is it negative or positive? For example, is media causing an audience to be more violent, or having a calming effect?

- Extent: How much effect on an audience does this claim suggest? Does it change how someone is feeling, affect how they see the world or change their actions? Is it a short- or long-term effect?

- Audience: What specific audience is it claimed the media has an effect on? Is it a specific type of vulnerable audience? Do the researchers discuss, age, race, social standing or gender?

- Type of evidence: What type of evidence does the claim provide? What are the strengths and weaknesses of this type of evidence? Take a close look at it and analyse whether it supports the claims being made about media influence.

- Organisation: Who is responsible for the claim and evidence provided? Who has paid for the research? Do they have a vested interest in the claim being made?

Learning activities

1   Find examples for each type of research or evidence covered in this unit and, using the NEAT-O approach, analyse them to find their strengths and weaknesses.

2   Design an experiment to see if violent media makes teenagers more violent in the real world. How would you set it up? What would the strengths and weaknesses of your research method be?

3   Find three studies that explore how others have tested to see if violent media makes someone more violent. What type of research method did they use, and what was the outcome? Evaluate the validity of the research.

8.6 Media regulation and control

Throughout the world, including Australia, there are regulatory institutions and practices that attempt to control the media and protect audiences.

MEDIA REGULATION IN AUSTRALIA

Apart from media producers and audiences, Australian regulatory institutions are also attempting to control the media. As media products have moved away from traditional distribution models and producers can reach large audiences in their bedrooms, policing the media has become increasingly difficult.

AUSTRALIAN COMMUNICATIONS AND MEDIA AUTHORITY

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) is a government-funded statutory body that oversees many of the regulatory practices of the media. ACMA is a media 'watchdog' that oversees many mediums in Australia, including radio, television, internet, film, video games and print publications. Some of the roles of ACMA are:

- ensuring that government legislation regarding the media is followed and enforced
- promoting self-regulation in the media industry, while ensuring consumers are protected
- encouraging media institutions to act within the audience's interests.

ACMA performs these roles in a variety of ways. They issue broadcast licences for television and radio stations, and enforce the conditions of those licenses. They also enforce industry codes of practice and government legislation.

ACMA also handles complaints. If a member of the public feels that a broadcaster has not dealt with their complaint about a breach of their codes of practice, they can take their complaint to ACMA to investigate. ACMA can deliver consequences to the broadcaster, ranging

FIGURE 8.6.1 The Mystery of the Wireless by Reg Mombassa. ACMA issues broadcast licences for television and radio stations.

from fines to cancelling their licence. A major criticism of ACMA is its limitations to these consequences. ACMA has no mid–tiered consequences that can be meted out to broadcasters. They are limited to either easily recouped fines or a revoked licence, which is only done for serious breaches of the codes of practice.

REASONS FOR REGULATION

There are many uses and needs for regulation, which often depend on the medium the media product is from. Overall, most media regulation is conducted in order to protect the public against the interests of the media producer. While the reasons listed below are often thought of as being for the greater good, some argue that the more the media is regulated, the less freedom our society has. These reasons can also be challenged in the context of a more globalised media.

Learning activities

1 Explore the ACMA website and its media releases to explore its role within the media industry.

2 Undertake a news search for ACMA and find a case study where ACMA was involved in the regulation of Australian media. Explain what ACMA's role was.

FIGURE 8.6.2 Media regulation in Australia exists to protect vulnerable audiences from content that may harm or disturb them.

PROTECTING VULNERABLE AUDIENCES

The main role for most regulatory bodies is to protect the audience from that which may harm or disturb them, especially those audiences who are seen as being especially vulnerable. For instance, the Children's Television Standards are government regulations that deal specifically with free-to-air television, including advertising, which is directed at children. These regulations spell out what persuasive techniques children's advertisements cannot use and seek to ensure that their food and beverage advertisements do not promote unhealthy habits.

The understanding of a cause and effect relationship between the media and this vulnerable audience is hard to prove but, because it is the prevailing community understanding, government and industry leaders need to be seen to actively protect them. As well as the understanding that people may never fully understand how they are influenced by the media, a critique of regulation that protects so-called vulnerable audiences is that it may restrict others from seeing the content themselves.

Free-to-air commercial and government-controlled stations were easy to put in checks and balances for. However, the move to digital platforms that present media from a world of sources makes this harder to put in place. For instance, in 2009 the government attempted to regulate the internet through the use of mandatory internet filters. It ran a trial of the ISP-centred filters that blocked certain sites that would be refused classification under the National Classification Scheme. The government scrapped the idea when it found that the filters could be easily bypassed, slowed down internet speed and proved unpopular with the majority of Australians.

INFORMING THE PUBLIC

Many classification-based regulatory schemes are put in place so audiences know what is included in a media product. For instance, one of the principles of the National Classification Code, which classifies all film and video games rented or sold in Australia, is that 'everyone should be protected from exposure to unsolicited material that they find offensive'. Classification gives the audience enough information to know whether a media

product is for them. This is why all film posters have a classification code on them, or why information about the type of violence in a television show is told to you at the beginning. Some classifications are 'advisory' and exist just to provide information, while others can be restricted categories, which may dictate the time or place the media product can be consumed or how old you have to be to consume it.

The advent of streaming services and online-only games has meant the old classification systems have had to evolve. Social media platforms provide basic warnings on some flagged content, but regulators cannot keep up with live video services on sites such as YouTube, Instagram and Facebook, raising concerns about what users could be exposed to without notice.

PROTECTING CULTURAL IDENTITY

The following rules are in place to ensure there is Australian content on our screens and radio:

- Free-to-air primary commercial television stations must broadcast 55 per cent Australian content between 6.00 a.m. and midnight in a calendar year. They must also broadcast a certain quota of Australian drama, children's and documentary programs.

- Digital commercial multi-channels, such as 7mate or Gem, must broadcast 1460 hours of Australian content between 6.00 a.m. and midnight per calendar year (or 22 per cent).

- Free-to-air broadcasters must also make sure that 80 per cent of the total advertising between 6.00 a.m. and midnight is produced in Australia.

- While the ABC does not have a specific Australian content quota, its charter states that one of its functions is to 'provide broadcasting programs that contribute to a sense of national identity and inform and entertain, and reflect the cultural diversity of the Australian community'.

- Australian commercial radio stations are required to play at least 55 per cent Australian-performed music between 6.00 a.m. and midnight.

We have these rules to ensure that Australia has a strong media industry that can provide employment for its locals. Without these rules, broadcasters would likely import all their content from overseas, which would be much cheaper. It is also important that Australian culture is reflected in the media that Australians consume. As an industry, we need to ensure that our own stories are told.

FIGURE 8.6.3 Australian television show *Please Like Me*. Regulations are in place to ensure that there is Australian content on our screens.

Critics of these quotas and regulations complain that they make it hard to compete with internet platform competitors who are not subject to the same regulations. For example, internet-based radio stations and music-streaming services are exempt from Australian music quotas, putting pressure on local media organisations who say that the quotas are unsustainable and the Australian music industry would be better served by more government grants.

Australian television broadcasters argue that it is unfair that streaming services such as Netflix and Stan have no Australian content regulations. There have been calls to demand a 20 per cent quota on these services, as Europe is attempting, or for the streaming services to contribute to a digital content fund. Some broadcasters are calling to scrap the content regulations altogether to ensure it is a fair playing field for everyone.

ENSURING A RANGE OF VIEWS

Throughout history we have seen that diversity in the media is important. Without making sure there is a range of different people owning the media, audiences may be exposed to only certain points of view, or culturally diverse members of society might feel little connection to the media and the culture. It is generally accepted that it is important for a healthy democracy to have available a broad and diverse media, where ideas can be debated and governments can be held accountable. Since the media is a powerful tool, we as a society need to be mindful of who wields it.

Australia has specific laws regarding cross-media ownership, which concerns placing limits on individuals owning different types of media in the same licence area. There are five main rules that apply to television, radio and newspapers:

- Individual television networks can reach just 75 per cent of the population.
- Media companies can only own two out of three media platforms—radio, television and newspapers—in any city.
- Media companies cannot own more than one television licence in a city.
- Media companies cannot own more than two radio licences in a city.
- There must be at least five independent operators in a city, or four in a regional area.

These rules have helped ensure that there is some diversity in the ownership of Australian media, even though our media ownership is some of the most concentrated in the world. However, many in the media industry say that the ownership rules are outdated and make it harder to compete in a more globalised media landscape. Industry lobbyists have pushed for changes in these laws for years and have succeeded in many—including the requirement that an individual has to be Australian to own Australian media.

Learning activities

1   Create a table that includes the reasons we have media regulation in Australia, why those reasons are important and the weaknesses of that regulation.

2   What are some of the reasons to have less regulation in Australia? Do these reasons outweigh the need for regulation?

3   Write an argument for more or less regulation in one of these areas as a letter to the editor in a local newspaper.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF REGULATION IN AUSTRALIA

Although ACMA is in charge of the regulation of the media in Australia, there are different ways in which regulation is done in different sectors. The three main types are government regulation, industry regulation and self-regulation.

ACMA is the main government-run regulatory body, which, among other duties, ensures that government legislation concerning Australian media is enacted.

AUSTRALIAN CLASSIFICATION BOARD

The Australian Classification Board is a government statutory body that classifies films, video games and certain publications for exhibition, sale or hire in Australia in accordance with the National Classification Scheme. The Australian Classification Board gives these items a classification according to the National Classification Code.

The Classification Code requires classification decisions to give effect, as far as is possible, to four key principles:

1 Adults should be able to read, hear, see and play what they want.
2 Minors should be protected from material likely to harm or disturb them.
3 Everyone should be protected from exposure to unsolicited material that they find offensive
4 The need to take account of community concerns about depictions that condone or incite violence, particularly sexual violence, and the portrayal of persons in a demeaning manner.

Under the Classification Act, the matters to be taken into account in making a classification decision include the:

- standards of morality, decency and propriety generally accepted by reasonable adults
- literary, artistic or educational merit (if any) of the content
- general character of the content, including whether it is of a medical, legal or scientific character, and
- persons or class of persons to whom it is published or is intended or likely to be published (i.e. the audience).

Extracts from the *Classification Act* (1995)

CLASSIFICATION DECISIONS

When deciding on a classification, the board considers the text against six classifiable elements: themes, violence, sex, language, drug use and nudity. The Board considers the impact of these elements, including their frequency, intensity, level of detail and their cumulative effect. The Board also considers the context of the elements, such as looking at the purpose and tone of the media product.

Under the Classification Code, films can be classified into these categories:

- G (general)
- PG (parental guidance recommended)
- M (recommended for mature audiences)
- MA 15+ (not suitable for people under 15)
- R 18+ (restricted to 18 years and over)
- X 18+ (restricted to 18 years and over; material of sexually explicit nature)
- RC (refused classification).

The needs of the Australian public are varied and the classification decisions seek to strike a balance between permitting adults to make choices about their viewing, gaming and reading habits, while respecting the wishes of others to not be exposed to material they find confronting, and to have measures in place to protect children from inappropriate content.

Filmmakers and distributors can request a review of a classification decision made by the Classification Board to the Australian Classification Review Board (ACRB). Ridley Scott's sci-fi epic *Prometheus* (2012) (see Figure 8.6.4) was downgraded from MA to M by the ACRB. Originally, the film was granted an MA rating, and the distributor, 20th Century Fox™, submitted a request for the rating to be reassessed. A five-member panel ruled in the distributor's favour and the film, which was originally recommended for 15+ audiences, was able to be seen by younger viewers.

FIGURE 8.6.4 *Prometheus* (2012) was downgraded from MA to M by the Australian Classification Review Board.

CLASSIFICATION CHALLENGES

The classification system in Australia faces many challenges. The biggest may be a concern about its obsolescence. A study conducted by the Department of Communication and the Arts in 2016 found that parents mostly use the classification system with primary-school-aged children. Eighty-one per cent of people believe that 'ultimately it is up to parents/guardians to decide what is best for children to watch or play'. In addition, the majority of parents were more concerned about 'what young people might see on YouTube and other video-sharing websites than shows, films, apps and computer games'.

Although the classification system is used mostly for children's content, the system is seen as one of the most restrictive in the world with regard to more mature-themed content, especially violent video games. Even with the introduction of an adults-only R rating for video games in 2013, many games have been 'refused classification' usually for content that includes violence, gang-related content or using drugs as some kind of 'power-up'. The Board has said that video games will get higher ratings than films, because the interactivity gives games a higher intensity. Video-game producers usually adjust the game to get it approved, or sometimes just encourage gamers to download the game illegally, bypassing the classification system completely.

Another challenge for the Classification Board is the number of media products that they need to classify. In 2015–2016, the Classification Board made 3777 classification decisions, including 477 computer games and 3156 all done with a board of fourteen people. There is so much content to review on platforms such as Netflix, and the thousands of digital games available on app stores. The Board has started to trial and implement self-regulatory tools for these media producers. For online and mobile games, this includes the use of the International Age Rating Coalition tool and the Board and Netflix have created a similar tool for its film and television content.

While the Board has the power to revoke any classification decision made using these tools and replace them with their own, they cannot review every decision made by media producers, which could lead to incorrectly classified content being made available in Australia.

INDUSTRY REGULATION

The Australian Government, through ACMA, promotes industry regulation in the media sector. Industry regulation is a system by which a section of the media industry (such as advertising, press, television or radio) sets voluntary rules and standards of practice that go beyond what they are obligated to do legally. Industry regulatory bodies create codes of practice, which are then registered by ACMA and are responsible for enforcing the media sector's commitment to these rules.

These bodies exist partly due to good will. The media industries does not wish to cause harm or offence to the Australian public. They also know that a fair, honest and ethical industry regulatory body means that they will face minimal government intervention.

FREE TV AUSTRALIA

FreeTV Australia is the industry body for the commercial television stations. It is intended to 'regulate the broadcast content of commercial free-to-air television according to current community standards, and to assist viewers in making informed choices about their television viewing'.

Their code of practice includes:

■ how television content is classified

■ the days and times certain classified material can be aired

■ rules regarding news and current affairs content

■ limits on the amount of advertising allowed

■ advertising restrictions on alcoholic drinks, films, computer games and gambling

■ how complaints are received and handled by the station.

An issue with the FreeTV Codes of Practice is that it does not include any content that is streamed from their websites. Online streaming content is regulated under the Online Content Scheme of the *Broadcasting Services Act*, but it is through a complaints-based mechanism, and includes content that has been classified, or likely to be classified at R 18+ or above or MA 15+ on a commercial basis.

ADVERTISING STANDARDS BUREAU

The Advertising Standards Bureau (ASB) is the industry regulatory body that manages the complaints-based system of the advertising industry in Australia. This includes advertising or marketing on any medium that is published or broadcast. The system upholds many codes, including a code of ethics, which states that its intent is to 'ensure that advertisements and other forms of marketing communications are legal, decent, honest and truthful and that they have been prepared with a sense of obligation to the consumer and society and a sense of fairness and responsibility to competitors'.

> The Code of Ethics states that consumers can complain about advertisements that:
> - portrays people in a discriminatory way or vilifies them
> - uses sexual appeal which is exploitative or degrading, or insensitively treats sex or nudity towards the relevant audience
> - portrays violence out of context
> - uses inappropriate or strong language
> - depicts material against community standards on health and safety.

There are other codes that are also covered, including ones that specifically relate to advertising directed at children, about motor vehicles, and for food and beverage products.

The Advertising Standards Board will review complaints that have been submitted, allow the advertiser to respond to it and then dismiss or uphold it. If the complaint is upheld, the advertiser needs to remove the advertisement or modify it to remove the offending element.

The problem with the complaints-based system is that, by the time an offending advertisement has been withdrawn, it may have been in circulation for weeks. Also, if an advertiser is asked to pull an advertisement and they don't, the Board can do nothing as they do not have the power to enforce the Code of Ethics.

SELF-REGULATION

All media companies self-regulate in some way. They make decisions on what they will or will not broadcast, host or share on their platforms through various methods such as community guidelines, terms of use agreements and codes of conduct. Although all media companies have legal and ethical obligations to ACMA and other industry regulators, they also have in-house standards. These are often used to set the tone of what the company should be. These self-regulatory policies are especially important on platforms that house user-generated content. They seek to strike a balance between allowing the community a broad range of expression and being bound by their legal and ethical obligations.

Instagram Community Guidelines (the short version)

> We want Instagram to continue to be an authentic and safe place for inspiration and expression. Help us foster this community. Post only your own photos and videos and always follow the law. Respect everyone on Instagram, don't spam people or post nudity.

YouTube Community Guidelines

YouTube Guidelines have been updated in the past to reflect changing community values and this is an ongoing process. The following YouTube guidelines are the requirements users needed to follow in 2017.

> **Nudity or sexual content**
>
> YouTube is not for pornography or sexually explicit content. If this describes your video, even if it's a video of yourself, don't post it on YouTube. Also, be advised that we work closely with law enforcement and we report child exploitation.
>
> **Violent or graphic content**
>
> It's not okay to post violent or gory content that's primarily intended to be shocking, sensational, or disrespectful. If posting graphic content in a news or documentary context, please be mindful to provide enough information to help people understand what's going on in the video. Don't encourage others to commit specific acts of violence.

Hateful content

Our products are platforms for free expression. But we don't support content that promotes or condones violence against individuals or groups based on race or ethnic origin, religion, disability, gender, age, nationality, veteran status, or sexual orientation/gender identity, or whose primary purpose is inciting hatred on the basis of these core characteristics. This can be a delicate balancing act, but if the primary purpose is to attack a protected group, the content crosses the line.

Spam, misleading metadata, and scams

Everyone hates spam. Don't create misleading descriptions, tags, titles, or thumbnails in order to increase views. It's not okay to post large amounts of untargeted, unwanted or repetitive content, including comments and private messages.

Harmful or dangerous content

Don't post videos that encourage others to do things that might cause them to get badly hurt, especially kids. Videos showing such harmful or dangerous acts may get age-restricted or removed depending on their severity.

Copyright

Respect copyright. Only upload videos that you made or that you're authorized to use. This means don't upload videos you didn't make, or use content in your videos that someone else owns the copyright to, such as music tracks, snippets of copyrighted programs, or videos made by other users, without necessary authorisations.

Threats

Things like predatory behavior, stalking, threats, harassment, intimidation, invading privacy, revealing other people's personal information, and inciting others to commit violent acts or to violate the Terms of Use are taken very seriously. Anyone caught doing these things may be permanently banned from YouTube.

SELF-REGULATION AND CHALLENGES

A challenge of self-regulation on some platforms is enforcing conditions on all of the content. For instance, it is estimated that there are 300 hours of video uploaded to YouTube every minute and over 300 million photos uploaded to Facebook every day. To regulate all this content, platforms rely on automated and community reporting systems, which can be seen as flawed and uneven. Flagged videos on YouTube can be automatically blocked on the site, which can be abused by malicious users. YouTube's content identification system, which matches copyrighted content on the platform, can take down legitimate videos that has content that has been created for fair use reasons, such as commentary and critique.

Learning activities

1   In your own words describe government, industry and self-regulation.

2   Draw a diagram that lays out some of the different media regulatory bodies in Australia and how they are connected.

3   What do you think is the most effective type of media regulation, and which is best for Australia? List the strengths and weaknesses of each type.

4   Go to the Ad Standards website and find a complaint against an advertisement that was upheld.
    • What was the nature and extent of the complaint?
    • What was the outcome and do you agree with it? Explain.

5   Look up the community standards of a social network that you use.
    • Do you agree with these standards? Explain.
    • How does the platform enforce them?
    • Do you think the organisation does enough to ensure their users are protected, or do they regulate too much? Explain.

6   What does media regulation assume about the relationship between media texts and its audiences? Which media influence theory would best describe the understandings of regulation?

8.7 Media and agency

Media institutions, audiences and government are increasingly using technology—platforms and tools together—that are reshaping the world around us.

MEDIA THEORY, REGULATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Media theories and regulation have changed drastically over a short period of time, thanks to technology that makes it easier to consume and create media texts. There are now very different ways in which media institutions, audiences and government agencies are using the media. These media platforms, tools and technologies are actively being used to shape the world around us.

INDIVIDUALS AND THE MEDIA

There used to be high barriers in place that made it difficult for individuals to have a voice in the media. Media platforms and technologies were in relatively limited supply, and expensive to create and use. Now, internet platforms have made the barrier to producing media very low. There are also many ways that people can make money using these new platforms. Twitter accounts have led to book deals, Instagrammers are paid to show their products, and YouTube has a partner earnings program that allows its users to get a cut of the advertising revenue.

FIGURE 8.7.1 YouTube producer and social media star Casey Neistat is an example of how audiences of today can use new media platforms to their advantage.

Learning activities

1 Has new media made you a media producer? If so, explain how you use media technologies and platforms to create media products and share them online.

2 Now explore how another media producer shares content and makes money online without the need for a large company behind them.

FANDOMS

Everyone is a fan of at least something—that one television show, celebrity or film franchise that excites you the most. You may even be part of a 'fandom'—a community of people who share your passion and actively contribute to it. You might join a Facebook group, run a Tumblr™ blog, contribute to a Twitter hashtag or create and share memes about the show.

Fandoms create alternative communities for people. Individuals have long been interested in creating communities for themselves with those who share the same values and interests. This largely relied on people being physically close to us. Now, with the growth of connected media technologies, we see communities that have large geographical distances between them.

Sherlock Holmes

Some fans are also so passionate about their texts, that they may become quite critical of them—so much so that a critical mass of fans can have an influence over the product. This isn't just a new phenomenon that stemmed from Twitter hashtags and digital petitions. One of the first and biggest fandoms was for Arthur Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes*. Doyle's original short stories, which were published in the newspaper, attracted rabid fans who would write Sherlock fan mail and discuss the latest episodes in the letters section of the paper. When Doyle famously killed off Sherlock, the fandom wore black armbands, wrote angry letters and signed petitions for Holmes to come back from the dead.

FIGURES 8.7.2 AND 8.7.3 *The Return of Sherlock Home*s by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and Benedict Cumberbatch in the television version of *Sherlock*

Eventually Doyle did bring him back from the dead, but only wrote about him sparingly. Holmes fans decided they wanted more and wrote their own sequels, imitations and take-offs. The fandom for Sherlock has only grown since. Everybody still knows who Sherlock is, and the specific symbolic elements that make up a Sherlock representation. We all have our favourite Sherlock incarnation and can thank one of the first active fandoms for this.

Fans eventually did get Doyle to bring Sherlock properly back from the dead. Now with the internet, fandoms are more organised than ever before to try to influence their favourite creators into how they think 'their' texts should look. A fandom can feel an ownership over a media text and will fight for what they think is correct even if that is the opposite of how the creator themselves feels about it, creating a tension between the producer and audience.

Firefly

Audiences have always felt that they have had some control over the films and television shows that are produced—ratings or box office takings are generally good indicators of this. A fandom can help fight for a text that has not been popular. An example of this is the 2002 sci-fi *Firefly*, from the maker of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, Joss Whedon. The show was cancelled after one season after Fox gave it an unfavourable timeslot, showed episodes out of order and gave it misleading advertising. Fans of the show complained loudly about this and tried to get it renewed.

Although another season never eventuated, a *Firefly* film *Serenity* was made in 2005 and a series of comics was released shortly after.

FIGURE 8.7.4 A scene from *Serenity* (2005), a film made after the fandom of the show *Firefly* protested that it had been mishandled by Fox

FANDOMS AS CONSUMERS

Producers rely on texts with strong fandoms, as these active fans are often good consumers. The *Star Wars* universe keeps expanding because of a strong fandom, and *Harry Potter* books, films and spin-offs are planned until way into the future. Cult-status shows such as *The X Files*, *Twin Peaks* and *Gilmore Girls* have all been brought back because of their fandoms, almost guaranteeing returns on investment.

FANDOMS AS CRITICS

Because of their passion, fandoms can often be the biggest critics of these works. Henry Jenkins (2006) argued that fans expect the best from their cultural heroes and so they have a right to express themselves on these products.

> Fandom, after all, is born of a balance between fascination and frustration: if media content didn't fascinate us, there would be no desire to engage with it; but if it didn't frustrate us on some level, there would be no drive to rewrite or remake it.

If they are not happy with how a show, franchise or series is headed, fans may demand changes (and now with social media they can do this directly with the creator themselves) or reinterpret the work for themselves in writing or artwork. Sometimes the strength of a fandom's reaction can have longstanding effects on the future of the media product. In a 2016 episode of CW's *The 100*, a popular character, Lexa, was killed off mid-season. There was a strong reaction from fans, especially since she was one of several lesbian characters who had been killed off on numerous television shows that season. Fans complained that the character's death played into a familiar trope where gay characters die in television shows soon after attaining happiness. Show creator Jason Rothenberg found out about the reaction when watching fan videos online and said, 'Knowing what I know now, I would have done things differently'.

Often, this brings up questions of authorship. If the creators are just giving fans what they want, the question arises as to whose text it really is. Fandoms often try to claim ownership over as much of the product as possible, while creators have to maintain the delicate balance of keeping their fans happy while allowing their story to evolve and hold onto their own sense of artistic control.

FANDOMS CHALLENGING CONTROL OF STORIES

The *Star Wars* franchise has an active fandom going back to the original trilogy. Creator George Lucas always ensured that he retained authorship of his product, which has led to many challenges. Seeing the value in fan-created works, Lucas has encouraged them, but only in official *Star Wars* competitions. The biggest way Lucas claims authorship over his works is demonstrated in the case of the special editions of the original *Star Wars* trilogy in 1997.

In the lead-up to the release of the prequels, Lucasfilm™ did a theatrical re-release of the three films, which he had digitally altered. Most of these alterations were clean-ups and restorations, adding some special effects and making sure that they were more in line with the upcoming films. It has been argued, however, that other changes he made altered characters or plot points. The most controversial change was a shoot-out in the Cantina scene in *Star Wars: A New Hope*. In the original cut of the film, Han Solo shoots bounty hunter Greedo after a tense standoff. In the special edition, Han Solo shoots only after Greedo fires at him first.

Fans were outraged by this change, saying that it altered the arc of Solo's character from a cold-blooded killer to someone willing to risk his own life for someone else. Lucas claims that Greedo always shot first and was just fixing poor coverage of the scene.

FIGURE 8.7.5 Han Solo shot first

Lucas has continually tinkered with his films in re-releases, changing titles, effects and scenes. He claims that due to time limitations, the original films were not finished as he would have liked them and he was just updating them to reflect his original intent. Fans complain that because the original film is not available to buy, they cannot enjoy the version they originally fell in love with. Some have attempted to recreate the original film through their own restorations by digitally combining and changing the film from various sources.

FAN ENTITLEMENT

This fight for control over media products sometimes leads to 'fan entitlement'—the idea that fans feel they are owed something from media creators—that their voice must be heard ... or else. Fans are now more likely to make demands of their media, which might be through trending hashtags, online petitions or sometimes even threats to the creators. Examples of this have been fan backlashes against an all-female *Ghostbusters* cast and a call to make Elsa gay in the *Frozen* sequel.

FIGURE 8.7.6 Sean Murray from Hello Games demonstrates the game No Man's Sky before its release

FANDOM AND VIDEO GAMES

Video game creators can be confronted with angry fandoms, sometimes before a product is even released. The space exploration video game No Man's Sky™ by Sean Murray and Hello Games™, quickly gained a cult following when it was announced in 2013, but fans quickly turned sour. The release date was pushed back, which caused many fans to complain that this had ruined their experience since they planned to play the game over summer. When the game finally did come out, many fans were upset that it didn't live up to the hype. Some even tried to sue Hello Games for false advertising.

Learning activities

1   Define the term 'fandom' in your own words.

2   What fandoms do you belong to, if any? Describe how you contribute to them.

3   Choose a fan community and study it. What type of content does the community allow and not allow? How much of a connection is there between the producers of the media product and the fandom? When has the fandom been unhappy about the media product?

4   Describe fan entitlement. Do you think that fans should have a say in how a media product is made, or do you think it is purely up to the producer?

5   Describe a time when a fandom has had agency over a media product, either from the examples given above, or from another instance.

INSTITUTIONS AND THE MEDIA

Engaging with media is always a transaction. In more traditional media, this transaction is simple. It might be you give money to watch a certain film or agree to put up with commercials to watch a television show. Now, that transaction has become significantly more complicated. Multi-platform media conglomerates don't just want you to pay to watch a film, they also want you to watch the television show, buy the video game, use their hashtag and buy the action figure. Media has become better at hooking you onto its content using psychological techniques. Netflix knows exactly which episode of a series 'hooked' you to

watch the rest of the season. Free-to-play video-game apps use a range of techniques to make sure you keep playing and hopefully buy some in-game currency. Advertising has also become more sophisticated. Instead of advertising to a broad range of audiences, advertisers can now pinpoint very specifically who they want to send their message to.

THE PRIVACY PARADOX

An expression that is used often in relation to social media goes something like this: 'If what you are getting online is for free, you are not the customer, you are the product'. Social network platforms have become a ubiquitous necessity. People love the convenience of living online. They sign up to free services, which they see as making their lives better and, to do so, they give up some of their privacy. The 'privacy paradox' is the tension between these two ideas. It is interesting to think about whether the ease of the web is worth giving up some aspects of your privacy.

We understand that any social situation requires some kind of self-disclosure, which is why we are willing to do so online. Many social networks encourage this behaviour so they can collect this information and sell it to advertisers. Go on to Facebook and you are encouraged to share how you are feeling, where you are and what you are doing. Facebook wants you to react to other posts, whether a photo makes you happy or a news article makes you sad.

By engaging in this, you are not just sharing this information with your online friends, you are helping Facebook understand who you are. If you like pictures of babies, visit the beach regularly and posts about Donald Trump make you angry, Facebook might have an advertisement just for you.

FIGURE 8.7.7 Today, it is hard to escape from the eyes of governments and media institutions.

So, why do we give these platforms so much information? Often, it is because of immediate gratification bias—basically impulse posting. When people post on social media, they often get immediate feedback from their peers. People like to gratify their present self and push the cost onto their future self.

Another way media institutions collect information about you is through your smartphone. Many apps ask for location data and access to your microphone and image library. Other apps collect data about you that you might not even be aware of.

In Europe, there is a discussion around the concept of 'The Right to be Forgotten' as a human right. This is the idea that information should be able to be removed from the internet after a period of time, so mistakes from your past won't follow you forever online.

Learning activities

1   Research some of the techniques that games apps use to keep you coming back. Which of these techniques have you found most powerful? Which ones are in the apps that are on your phone now?

2   Who does Facebook think you are? Go to the weblink https://www.facebook.com/ads/ preferences to see the types of interests it has guessed you have and that will influence your ad preferences. Reflect on these interests. How well does Facebook know you?

3   Has there been a time when you thought the internet knew you too well? Have you ever seen an advertisement for something you needed at that point?

4   What does Google know about you? If your browser or phone is logged into a Google account, such as a YouTube or Gmail™ account, it may be collecting information about you. Go to https://myaccount.google.com to see what Google can access and has stored about you (including recordings of any audio searches you have made).

5   How do you feel about the privacy paradox? Do you believe you give up too much information online, or do you think it is worth it for the ease of use of these media platforms?

GOVERNMENTS AND THE MEDIA

We have explored how governments try to control the media through regulation to protect audiences. However, governments also use the media to try to inform or improve society. This is often done through the use of Public Service Announcement campaigns. These campaigns use media strategies to attempt to change people's behaviour or provide information.

THE GRIM REAPER

A famous Australian television campaign was the 1987 'Grim Reaper' commercial by the National Advisory Committee on AIDS (NACAIDS), which raised public awareness of the dangers of AIDS by depicting the Grim Reaper knocking over men, women and children with a bowling ball. The commercial, as part of a larger health awareness campaign, is said to be part of the reason Australia had a much smaller AIDS death rate than the USA who, at the time, cut off federal funding for AIDS awareness campaigns.

LOVE THE GAME, NOT THE ODDS

In 2016, the Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation (VRGF), a Victorian statutory authority, launched a campaign which included television, radio and online ads, as well as web resources for kids and parents. The campaign's main message was that children are seeing sports differently because of gambling advertisements, and need to be protected from any risks. The Foundation website claims that nearly a quarter of adolescents are more likely to gamble after seeing sports-betting advertisements, and that teenagers are more vulnerable to gambling advertising than adults and struggle to distinguish between advertising and program content.

The campaign raises concerns that gambling, an adult activity, is heavily promoted at sporting events, which are seen as family-friendly institutions. The campaign points to a study by the Foundation that claims that of 152 sports fans aged eight to sixteen, two-thirds could recall the name of at least one sports-betting brand, while one in five could identify three or more.
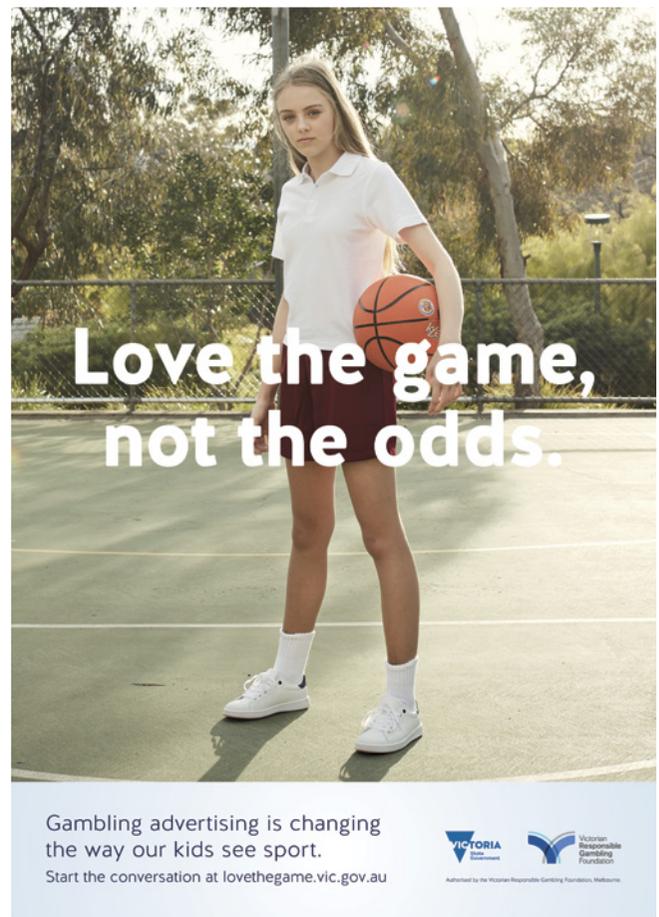
FIGURE 8.7.8 Image from the Love the Game, Not the Odds campaign

This campaign is happening while the regulations surrounding advertising betting sites during sports games are changing. In 2016, there were moves by the Australian Government and ACMA to limit the amount of sports-betting during live games, and the regulatory body, the Australian Association of National Advertisers, discussed how to restrict gambling promotions and ads that could influence children to gamble.

RESEARCH INTO GAMBLING ADVERTISING

A 2016 study by Samantha Thomas from Deakin University, titled 'Child and parent recall of gambling sponsorship in Australian sport', included a recall activity on sports teams and advertisers, and a series of questions regarding the impact of marketing on gambling attitudes and behaviours.

The primary target audience for the 'Love the Game, Not the Odds' media campaign was parents of 12–17 year olds in Victoria (the ABS puts this number at 944 000), with their secondary audience being the 'general community' in Victoria aged 30–55, including those who gamble on sport.

The VRGF had two objectives for their campaign. The first was 'to build awareness of how children and young adults' experience of sport is changing with gambling exposure'. They used survey techniques to see if they had reached this objective and claimed that:

- unprompted awareness of the campaign reached 51 per cent of the target audience

- the campaign recall among the primary and secondary target audiences was as follows: parents of children aged 12–17 years (54 per cent), sports fans (55 per cent) and regular sports gamblers (57 per cent)

- the most recalled element was the main campaign slogan 'Love the Game, Not the Odds' (55 per cent of those exposed).

The second objective of the campaign according to the VRGF was 'to build knowledge and confidence among parents to talk about gambling with their children, the risks and how to avoid them'. This objective was harder to measure, and survey techniques as well as statistics on the use of tools on their website were used to give some kind of understanding of whether their campaign had an impact. The VRGF claimed that:

- there were over 46 000 unique page views on the campaign website

- quiz completions totalled 2237

- 94 per cent of those exposed to the campaign indicated higher levels of concern over the impact the gambling environment and exposure to it had on their children's attitudes towards gambling, and the possibility of their children developing gambling problems later in life.

Through this campaign, the VRGF made a variety of claims about gambling media messages and their effect on vulnerable audiences. The VRGF also made claims about the effectiveness of their own media campaign on a specific audience.

According to research:

- total gambling expenditure in Australia increased 7.7 per cent, from $21.114 billion in 2013–14 to $22.734 billion in 2014–15

- per adult gambling expenditure in Australia increased from $1,171.09 to $1,241.86

- total sports betting expenditure in Australia increased from $626 million to $815 million (a 30.1 per cent increase). Sports betting now accounts for 4.51 per cent of total gambling expenditure (up from 3.99 per cent).

Source: Australian Gambling Statistics, 32nd edition

In 2017, the federal government announced that it will introduce a ban on gambling advertising before 8.30 p.m. during live sporting events, and for five minutes before and after the start of play.

Learning activities

1   What claims is the VRGF making about the nature and extent of influence regarding gambling advertising?

2   Read the Executive Summary of the 'Child and parent recall of gambling sponsorship in Australian sport' study, which can be found on the VRGF's website. What techniques have been used in this research? What are the strengths and weaknesses of this study? Do you think this study validates the claims made by the Foundation?

3   Analyse the claims made by the VRGF regarding the effect of their 'Love the Game, Not the Odds' media campaign. Does the evidence given back up these claims?

4   Research the current legislation and industry regulations surrounding betting advertising during sports programs. Do you think these regulations are effective, and what do they suggest about the relationship between betting advertising and teenage sports fans?

CHAPTER SUMMARY

- There is a tension between those that have agency in the media and those that want to control it. This tension exists between media audiences, producers and institutions and changes over time as media institutions, technologies and audiences change.

- There are a range of theories that attempt to explain the relationship between the media and its audiences, which can be broken down into direct effects trends, limited effects trend and cultural studies trends.

- Research and evidence is used to add validity to the claims of media influence theories. A range of evidence can be used from scientific research to treating current events as case studies. Media influence theories are also used to explain the outcome of research or case studies.

- It is important to be able to critically analyse any evidence used to develop or support media influence theories and understand how their strengths and weaknesses add or take away from the claim's validity.

- Media regulation in Australia attempts to balance the freedoms within a democracy as well as the need to protect the rights of the audience. This is done with a combination of government regulation, industry regulation and self-regulation.

- Audiences, institutions and governments use the media in various ways that have an effect on the relationship between media products and audiences.

- Despite all the evidence from research, studies and case studies, the debate surrounding the extent of the media's influence remains inconclusive.

EXAM PREPARATION

1 Describe how the agency and control of the audience and the media has evolved in the past twenty years.

2 Compare how any two of the media influence theories you have studied frame the relationship between the audience and the media producer.

3 Identify two claims made about the extent of media influence, and analyse the evidence used to support these claims.

4 Why do we regulate the media? Evaluate two reasons for media regulation in Australia.

5 Are Australia's regulation systems equipped to regulate newer media products? Explore this question with reference to two different media platforms or products.

6 Does any form of media make you uncomfortable? Explore an ethical or legal issue in the relationship between an audience and media product.

GLOSSARY

Active audience The idea that audiences are active in the creation of meaning in a media product.

Actuality An early term for documentary footage; still used sometimes to describe unrehearsed live action film sequences such as demonstrations.

Agency In media, the ability of a media culture participant to act independently and to make choices. An 'agent' may be an individual engaging with technology, social structures or media institutions and organisations.

Analogue/Digital 'Analogue' describes a media product that is physically present and has been mechanically produced such as a vinyl record, a Polaroid photo or 35 mm film. 'Digital' describes a media product that exists in the form of computer instructions such as a digital video or video game.

Antagonist The character in a narrative that opposes and places obstacles in the way of the protagonist (hero). Classic examples include The Joker and Lex Luthor.

Audience The viewer or receiver of a media product who is active in interpreting and creating meaning around it.

Audio bite A short audio passage edited from a longer piece and designed to have a powerful effect on the audience. A 'Frankenbite' is an audio passage made up of several pieces edited together to create a meaning that the speaker may not have intended.

Brief A set of instructions from a client to a media creator setting out their requirements.

Camera angle The position of the camera in relation to the subject; examples include high or low angle.

Camera movement The camera's movement while shooting, including tracking, panning, a tilt or a crane shot.

Camera shot The framing as determined by the distance between the camera and the subject; examples include close-up, mid-shot and long shot.

Censorship Control, usually external, over the content and presentation of a media product. This is most commonly associated with the government or religious suppression of media content via regulation.

Codes and conventions The structural and story elements that help an audience interpret a media narrative. In VCE Media, 'codes' can be seen as technical elements such as lighting, sound and camera. 'Conventions' can be seen as the elements that create and shape the story and plot, such as character motivation and cause and effect links. Codes

can be seen or heard while conventions have to be inferred or created by the audience.

Colonialism/Postcolonialism 'Colonialism' describes the forceful taking of land and the economic exploitation of it. The term is usually applied to areas that European countries invaded, mainly in the nineteenth century, such as parts of Africa, India and Asia. 'Post-colonialism' refers to the period after these countries achieved independence from the coloniser. In media terms, 'post-colonialist' describes media products that re-examine the coloniser's representations of the colonised.

Construction In media terms, this is the placing together of separate elements, such as video footage and sound, to create a media product.

Context Media products are both created and viewed in a variety of 'contexts'. These can be ideological, institutional or social and they influence not only how the product is made but also how we receive it.

Control The ability to exert power over somebody else's actions or choices.

Convergence The idea that media technologies are coming together. This idea has been popularised by Henry Jenkins who sees all media forms converging into a little black box. Compare this to 'hybridity'.

Creative Commons A non-profit, web-based organisation that allows creators to share their work and for others to use that work legally, usually for free.

Demographics In media, 'demographics' is the general term used to describe the characteristics of active media users such as age, income, viewing and listening habits. The term is also used to label a target audience such as teenagers or high-income earners.

Denotation/Connotation These are processes by which we create meaning. 'Denotation' can be seen as the object itself and 'Connotation' is the meaning we may give an object for example, denotation = 'snake', connotation = 'evil' or 'treacherous'.

Depth of field Used in moving image and photography to describe how much of what is seen in the frame is in focus. A shallow depth of field has usually only one thing in focus, while a broad depth of field will have everything in focus.

Diegetic/non-diegetic sound 'Diegetic sound' is the sound that is present in the world of the film; that is, sounds the actors can hear. 'Non-diegetic sound is what is added later such as voice-over or music.

Distribution The way in which a media product is made available to an audience.

Documentary A media product that claims to represent or have a relationship with an actual event or phenomenon.

Edit To arrange the separate elements of a media product together to create a final product.

Fade The gradual increase or decrease of vision, light or sound.

Forms In media, the type of media product such as moving image, photograph, print or audio piece.

Framing The idea that the media can purposely manipulate an issue to heighten its importance and make it a talking point for the public through a process of selection, exclusion, emphasis and elaboration.

Genre A French word meaning 'type', used to classify media products as documentary, action or science fiction, for example. Also, a style or mode of production that conforms to certain narrative conventions and audience expectations such as film noir.

Hybridity 'Hybridity' sees media forms coming together to make a different media product, but also allowing the separate forms to continue; for example, analogue and digital forms of sound have converged to form the MP3, but vinyl records still continue as a separate form.

Hyper-real In art terms, 'extra-' or 'ultra-real'. For Jean Baudrillard and Umberto Eco the 'hyper-real' is when we take as our reference point a media-created reality rather than our lived reality; for example, Sovereign Hill is a constructed reality, but it is what many of us think of when we imagine a Gold Rush town.

Ideology At its most basic, a set of political, social or economic ideas or beliefs; these are also contained in media products. 'Ideology' is a way that power can be maintained and distributed in a society; for example, capitalism is the dominant ideology in Western society.

Institution In media, an organisation with a value system or ideology that influences the way media products are created, produced and often distributed; for example, the Hollywood or Bollywood studio systems.

Inter-textual The way a text may refer to or contain elements of other texts.

Juxtapose To put together two separate elements, often in opposition, to create a meaning or effect; for example, a happy song lain over disturbing images.

Linear/non-linear narrative A 'linear narrative' is one that moves/unfolds in a logical sequence, usually chronologically. A 'non-linear narrative' may have flashbacks or flash-forwards.

Longitudinal study A research project or study that occurs over an extended period of time.

Male gaze A term created by Laura Mulvey to describe how an audience often adopts a male viewpoint or perspective when viewing a media narrative. This is usually created by the following sequence: a male looking, a cut to what he sees (usually a woman), then a cut back to the male looking. Mulvey sees this as one of the ways the media objectifies women.

Media product Intended for audience consumption. Examples of media products include feature films, episodes of a television program, podcasts, photographic images, print productions and web-based productions. For the purpose of VCE Media, media products can be tangible or intangible. A tangible media product is a product defined by the length of time audiences will engage with it. A feature film, for example, has a defined beginning, middle and end. An intangible media product is constructed in a way that allows audiences to engage with it in varied ways. A computer game like Minecraft or a virtual reality gaming experience is considered an intangible media product.

Mediation A third-party influence on the representation of reality. In television news, the camera mediates and selects, as does the editor.

Mise en scène Everything we see in the frame, including props, sets and the positioning of the actors.

Montage A technique of moving-image editing that involves a rapid succession of shots, often juxtaposed to convey an idea or feeling.

Moral panic A sudden increase in public alarm over the perception that something is creating a harmful effect on society or a particular group. In media terms, it is often a new media form. Video games have been a reliable source of moral panic over time.

Myths The stories a society creates to reinforce their beliefs or ideologies.

Narrative A coming together of story and plot in a logical sequence. The story is what happens; the plot is how it is shown or unfolds.

Non-linear An approach made possible by the introduction of digital technology, which allows users to move randomly through a text, starting or viewing work at the end, the beginning or the middle and continuing in whichever direction they choose.

Oligopoly The control of an industry or society by a few organisations or individuals.

Passive audience An outmoded theory of audience that saw them as passively receiving media content.

Podcast An audio product, typically in the form of an MP3 or AAC file that is distributed via the internet.

Point of view (narrative convention) The viewpoint from which the story is told; usually this is from the protagonist.

Point of view (technical code) When an audience sees what a character is looking at via the use of camera angles and editing.

Postmodern theory In media, 'postmodern theory' suggests that all members of an **audience** bring very different perspectives and interpretations to the same text and that, therefore, the media creator may have very little power to influence them. One school argues that there are no dominant or preferred meanings or readings of a text and that, furthermore, there is no such thing as an objective truth, certainty, reality or knowledge. Knowledge is created within and by a specific culture, and so is specific to that culture and to the time in which it was produced.

Production process The creation of a media product. The production process generally follows this sequence. In pre-production, an idea or concept is planned via a treatment, screenplay, layout, mock up and/or storyboard. In production, material is collected in the form of footage, images, audio and interviews, for example. Post-production is the arrangement of the material through editing, display or exhibition.

Propaganda The use of the media to persuade an audience toward a particular point of view or ideology, to the exclusion of all others.

Protagonist The hero or main character whose journey we follow. It is the protagonist and their desires and goals that move the narrative forward.

Qualitative research A research method that uses interviews and observations rather than data, encouraging depth.

Quantitative research A research method based on data collection and analysis such as a poll or survey.

Realism In 'realism', media narratives attempt to mimic the real world in order for them to be believable. 'Social realism' and 'neo-realism' are movements concerned with telling the stories of groups who have been marginalised by the mainstream media and are a reaction to the Hollywood-style narrative.

Reception How an audience receives and reacts to a media product.

Regulation/self-regulation 'Regulation' is the rules and constraints put on media organisations by the government. In Australia, the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) is responsible for the regulation and classification of films, computer games and publications. 'Self-regulation' is when a particular media industry such as commercial television agrees to regulate itself. However, in Australia, these media industries are still answerable to the ACMA.

Representation This is one of the key concepts in media. Media products are a re-presentation of reality; that is, they are interpretations and constructions. Media representations are mediated by the process of selection, omission and construction.

Script/screenplay Written directions for a moving image product. A script includes a description of scenes, the actors' dialogue, directions and important camera movements. The terms 'script' and 'screenplay' can be used interchangeably but, strictly speaking, 'screenplay' is used for writing for the screen.

Simulacra A concept made famous by French cultural theorist Jean Baudrillard that describes a false reality that is made up of **representations** so convincing that they have replaced what was once real.

Stereotype This term is usually used when talking about character. 'Stereotyping' can be seen as a type of visual shorthand where a number of characteristics are given to all members of a group. This may be based on race, gender or sexuality. 'Stereotypes' often have negative connotations such as 'All blondes are dumb.'

Storyboard A visual representation of a screenplay. The screenplay is broken down into camera shots and these are drawn. Some directors, such as Alfred Hitchcock, storyboard their entire film whereas others, such as Spike Lee, only storyboard scenes they think may be difficult to create.

Style An individual or collective's creative decisions when telling a story.

Target audience The specific group a media product creator wants to primarily reach, such as teenagers.

Three-point lighting A moving image technique to ensure the optimal lighting conditions. This consists of key lighting (in front of the subject), back lighting (behind the subject) and fill lighting (from the side).

Treatment The initial phase in the pre-production of a moving image narrative. It is a short, written description of the story.

Viral Refers to how a media product, usually a moving image, photograph or meme, is spread through communities by internet users via video-sharing sites, social media and email.

Voice-over The spoken word heard over images; this is a form of non-diegetic sound.

Vox pop Latin for 'people voice'. Refers to interviews with 'the person on the street'; 'vox pops' are most common in television news, current affairs, radio and podcasts.

White balance Involves removing any unrealistic colour casts in a video or photographic camera so that objects that appear white in real life appear white in the finished product.

Wiki A website made up of the collective work of a number of authors, which can be edited by users of the site.

Zine A small, self-published print publication that is usually made with the basic tools of a typewriter, a photocopier and a stapler and circulated within its own informal or underground networks.

Zoom A type of camera movement that closes in or pulls away from an object.

INDEX

Page numbers in **bold** refer to glossary items

ATTRIBUTIONS

The following abbreviations are used in this list: t = top, b = bottom, l = left, r = right, c = centre.

Disclaimer
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