NELSON
FILM, TELEVISION AND NEW MEDIA

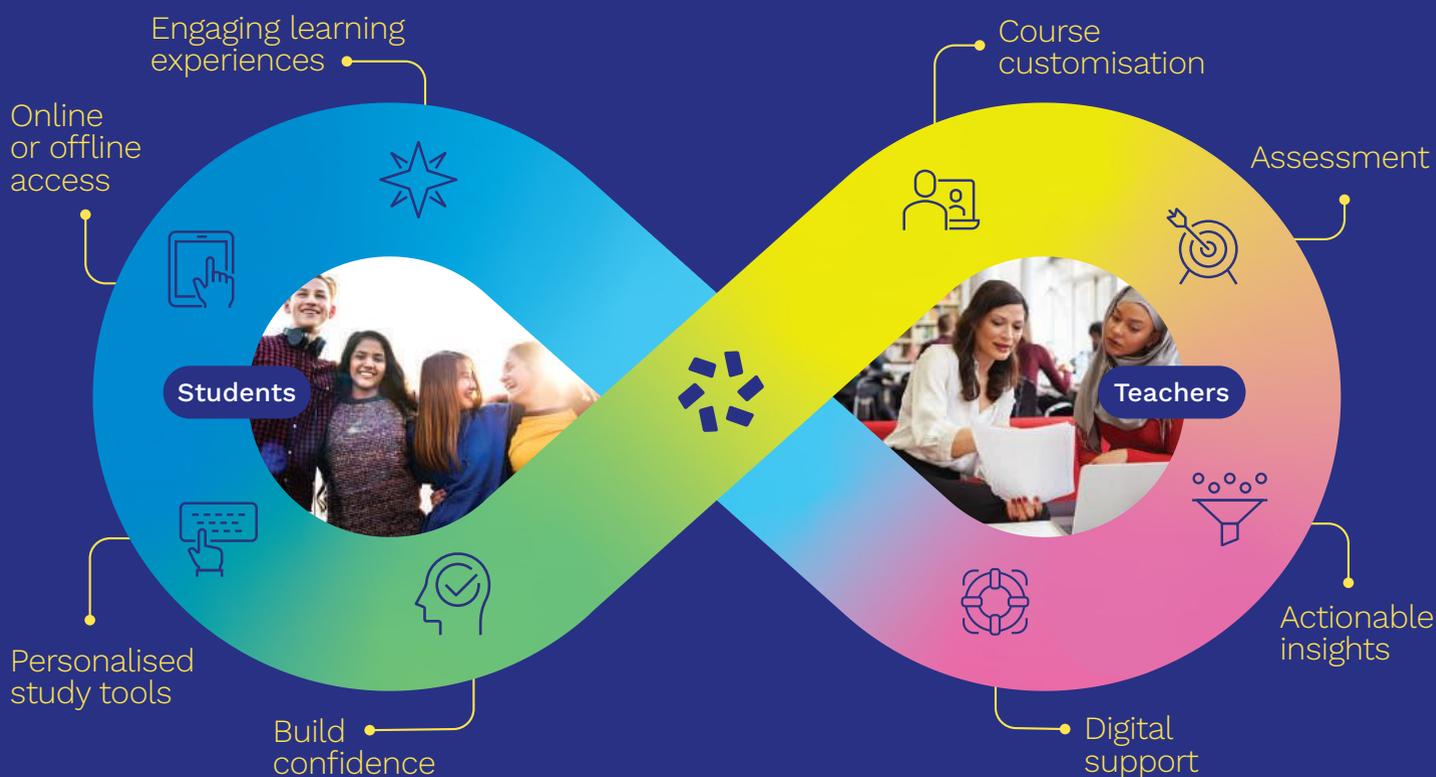## QCE UNITS 3 & 4

Colin Stewart
Kylie Agnew
Matthew Beattie

Aimee Gust
Kelsey Hall
Darren Sinclair

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Nelson

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dr Colin Stewart is a lifelong media educator. He holds a doctorate in media curriculum, and has taught senior secondary Film, Television & New Media and related junior media subjects for more than 40 years. He has tutored pre-service media teachers at two universities.

Kylie Agnew is an experienced senior teacher at Mansfield State High School, a Mensa Australia member and a member of the Australian Teachers of Media (ATOM) Queensland executive. She has taught senior Film, Television & New Media and junior Media Arts in regional and metropolitan areas.

Matthew Beattie is an experienced senior Film, Television & New Media teacher at Bellbird Park State Secondary College. He has worked in various roles in the media industry for over 20 years. He has extensive achievements in higher education, and is currently completing a second master's degree in artificial intelligence.

Aimee Gust is Head of Department (The Arts) at Brisbane State High School. She teaches Film, Television & New Media curriculum to pre-service teachers at university and is Vice President of Australian Teachers of Media (ATOM) Queensland.

Kelsey Hall is a senior Film, Television & New Media and Media Arts in Practice (MAP) teacher at Albany Creek State High School. She holds a Masters of Creative Industries in Film and is involved in various media education projects through her university connections. She is one of the Vice Presidents of ATOM Queensland.

Darren Sinclair is an experienced senior Film, Television & New Media teacher with industry experience in advertisements, television series, documentary, feature film, broadcast television, educational and corporate productions, independent films and events. Darren has worked various roles across sound, camera, editing, production and set construction. He is a First Nations descendant of the Yuin people and has three decades of classroom experience.

AUTHOR ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Nelson Film Television and New Media QCE Units 3&4 is a complete course book written specifically for the QCAA Film, Television and New Media syllabus. This authoritative text delivers content knowledge for deep understanding and skill building. It is written for Year 12 students who wish to learn about multi-platform and stylistic production, and also fully prepare for the case study and external exam. The highly visual text has a comprehensive yet flexible design, and is suitable for a variety of individual school teaching plans.

Structure

Within the text

The content has been broken into manageable chunks of information for students and comprehensively covers the subject matter from both syllabuses. This suits a variety of teaching and learning styles, but especially the 'chunk and chew' approach, shared in-class reading and independent student exploration via the flipped classroom approach. Important information and relevant quotes feature in breakout boxes. Icons on the page indicate a weblink or a link to a page on Nelson MindTap.

ArenaPal/Collection Christophel

Figure 12.15 A dying white woman is cared for by her adopted Indigenous daughter in Tracey Moffatt's *Night Cries: A Rural Tragedy* (1990). The film is an emotive portrayal of the relationship between mother and daughter, and is powerfully supported by vibrant, colour-saturated *mise en scène* and a soundscape.

Images as a learning channel

Nelson Film Television and New Media QCE Units 3&4 features a range of up-to-date and relevant images. Each image is accompanied by an extended caption that provides the students with additional information to enhance and deepen their learning experience.

Entertainment Pictures/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 14.12 Tim Burton's *Beetlejuice Beetlejuice* (2024) includes distorted figures and animation, exploring death and altered bodies. Burton uses the narrative to justify these distorted visuals with supernatural themes. Similarities in his visual style and lighting design can be seen in his distinctive version of *Alice in Wonderland* (2010), *The Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993) and *Corpse Bride* (2010).

End-of-section activities

Marzano's cognitions and the syllabus underpinning factors are structured into the student activities. Each activity is based around one of the key cognitions used in the syllabus. The activity sentence stem begins with the cognitive verb. The activity then pushes students to explore the full potential of the cognition by taking them through the enabling aspects of the cognition and key supporting concepts as listed in the syllabus. Each activity is also designed to reflect the syllabus underpinning factors of literacy, numeracy and the 21st-century skills (such as collaboration or critical thinking).

10.3 ACTIVITIES

1   **Analyse** how Quentin Tarantino uses celluloid film to create a unique visual aesthetic in his films. Provide examples from *Django Unchained* (MA15+, 2012) or other works. **Research** Tarantino's philosophy regarding celluloid film and his criticism of digital filmmaking. **Examine** the visual characteristics of celluloid film, such as grain texture and colour depth, in *Django Unchained* (MA15+, 2012) or other works. **Analyse** how these visual features enhance the mood, setting and authenticity of his narratives. **Compare** the aesthetic of celluloid

Spaced practice for the external exam

There is clear evidence that spacing out revision practice over an extended period of time helps to reinforce students' understandings. Accordingly, the student book has a highly structured 'Spaced Practice' revision task at the end of each chapter (excluding the production chapters). These tasks provide a stimulus, contextual information and a challenging exam-style question based on the understandings in the chapter.

SPACED PRACTICE

Stimulus: Trailer for *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1920).

Contextual information: *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1920) is possibly the first horror movie ever made. It helped launch the German Expressionist movement immediately after World War I in the context of a defeated Germany. In the story, an insane hypnotist forces his victim to commit murders. Themes in the film include the brutality of unquestioned authority and the line between sanity and insanity.

Question (Key concept – Languages): **Analyse** the use of lighting, camera angle, make-up and set design to represent the dark themes expressed in the trailer. **Evaluate** the effectiveness of the film's use of distorted realities to express the inner worlds of the characters. **Justify** your response with examples from the trailer.

Weblink
The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1920) Official Trailer #1 – German Horror Movie

Making and responding assessment

The 'Making and Responding' sections address student assessment outcomes in direct ways. These sections provide students with the practical information to complete formative and summative assessment tasks. Information about written, pre-production and production tasks is provided.

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MAKING AND RESPONDING

16   Statement of intent

WRITING THE STATEMENT OF INTENT

Every moving-image media product made provides a rich opportunity for reflection and growth as an artist. By evaluating and reflecting on their own work, a moving-image media artist is able to further develop their technical proficiency, consolidate their style, increase their innovation and creativity, and therefore improve their overall artistry.

Artistic intention

All moving-image media artists have an intention. This drives the choices made during the creation of their artworks and their continual reflection surrounding the effectiveness of choices. This intention may be stylistic, a response to context or process-based; that is, where the process of creation is considered more important than the final outcome.

Figure 16.1 Ballroom dancers Vanessa Cronin (Leonie Page), Liz Holt (Gia Carides) and Tina Sparkle (Sonia Kruger) in their competition finery. All choices in Baz Luhrmann's film *Strictly Ballroom* are driven by his artistic intent. He calls this the 'Red Curtain' style, and one aspect of this style is the use of a device to heighten reality. In *Strictly Ballroom*, this device is ballroom dance. The exaggerated and colourful world of competitive ballroom dance is present in every frame of Luhrmann's film, realising his artistic intent.

External exam preparation

Exams can be stressful for Year Twelve students. Doing well in an exam depends on having good subject understandings within the five key concepts. The Student Book has a dedicated chapter on responding to exam questions, as well as five sample exam questions. The Student Book provides an extremely comprehensive subject knowledge and helps to develop skills in each of the syllabus objectives and can also be used for individual study and revision.
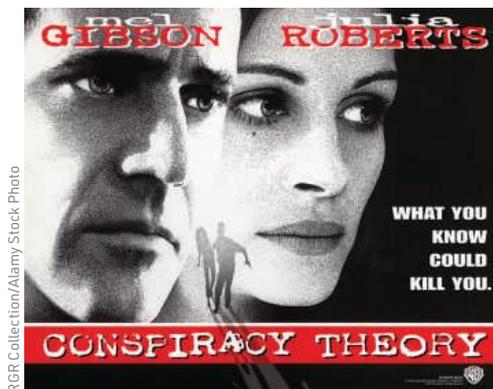
RGR Collection/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 6.7 *Conspiracy Theory* (1997) stars a paranoid character played by Mel Gibson, who believes NASA space shuttle flights were used to control earthquakes. In 2024, real-world weather forecasters received threats of beating, arrest and death from conspiracy theorists who believed the weather bureau *controlled* the weather. Two hurricanes hit Florida 12 days apart, prompting an American congresswoman to claim the storms were created and purposefully directed by the US government.

Nelson MindTap

An online learning space that provides students with tailored learning experiences.

- Access tools and content that make learning simpler yet smarter.
- **Flexible formats:** choose how you navigate using either the online e-book or offline PDFs.
- Margin links in the Nelson student book signpost multimedia student resources found on Nelson MindTap.

Weblink
Equation problems

For students:
- **Access** weblinks to consolidate and extend your learning.
- **Apply** key media concepts using the range of templates and resources.
- **Navigate** your own path, accessing the content as you need it.

For teachers*:
- **Use** syllabus-aligned teaching plans to implement the new QCE FTVNM Units 3 & 4 syllabuses with suggestions for programming and assessment.
- **Help** build your students' exam readiness with with nine key concept tests (Test Bank powered by Cognero) and scaffolding for Spaced practice questions.

* Complimentary access to these resources is only available to teachers who use this book as part of a class set, book hire or booklist. Contact your Cengage Education Consultant for information about access and conditions.

Security and privacy:
- Nelson MindTap joined the Safer Technologies 4 Schools (ST4S) Product Badge Program in 2024. The annual ST4S assessment is part of our commitment to supporting the online security and safety of students and schools. Learn more at st4s.edu.au.

1 Understanding the cognitions, key concepts and instrument-specific marking guides (ISMGs)

COGNITIONS IN THE QUEENSLAND ATAR SYSTEM

Cognitions are the different ways we think and process information. They underpin all the syllabuses in Queensland's senior assessment system.

All Queensland syllabuses are designed using a shared vocabulary based on thinking skills and criteria. This ensures that students can seamlessly apply the same cognitive processes, such as analysis, across different subjects such as Biology, Economics or Film, Television & New Media (FTVNM). These cognitive skills are referred to as **cognitions**.

In Queensland's senior schooling context, cognitions function as action verbs that structure syllabus and unit objectives, content, assessments and criteria. They make clear for teachers and students what they need to *do* with what the subject wants them to understand. For instance, simply asking students to write an essay on how *mise en scène* creates meaning is unhelpful, as an essay is an outcome, not a thinking process. Instead, ask students to **analyse** how *mise en scène* creates meaning, which clarifies the path to understanding. This involves breaking down *mise en scène* into its components such as lighting, costume and setting, and examining how these elements connect to convey meaning.

Marzano and Kendall's New Taxonomy

To develop a new curriculum system, the Queensland Curriculum Assessment Authority (QCAA) established various committees of teachers and university academics who researched educational systems worldwide, including thinking frameworks for learning and assessment. Marzano and Kendall's New Taxonomy is a framework for understanding how we learn. It divides learning into three main areas: cognitive (thinking and knowledge), **metacognitive** (managing one's own learning) and **affective/self-system** (feelings and attitudes). 'Cognitive' includes steps from simply recalling facts to solving complex problems. 'Metacognitive' helps students plan and reflect on their learning process. 'Affective' deals with how our emotions and values affect our learning.

Marzano and Kendall's New Taxonomy was chosen to underpin Queensland's senior syllabuses as it:
- offers a multidimensional approach to learning by integrating cognitive (thinking and reasoning), metacognitive (thinking about thinking) and affective domains (feelings, attitudes and emotions). This approach allows for a more complete understanding of student progress
- aligns with 21st-century skills by emphasising self-regulation and higher-order thinking, framing learning as not just about acquiring knowledge, but also about critical thinking and problem-solving
- enables nuanced assessment design, measuring a range of cognitive processes for a more accurate picture of student learning
- supports teaching strategies that engage students in diverse cognitive tasks, promoting deeper understanding.

Including metacognitive and affective/self-system aspects fosters a holistic approach to education, addressing not just what students know, but also how they manage their learning.

The **taxonomy** categorises cognitions into three levels, as follows:
1. Retrieval and comprehension (basic recall).
2. Analytical processes (reasoning and interpretation).
3. Knowledge utilisation (applying knowledge through problem-solving and decision-making).

Level 6 Self-System		
Level 5 Metacognitive System		
Level 4 Knowledge Utilization (Cognitive System)		
Level 3 Analysis (Cognitive System)		
Level 2 Comprehension (Cognitive System)		
Level 1 Retrieval (Cognitive System)		

Psychomotor Procedures / Mental Procedures / Information

Levels of Processing

Domains of Knowledge
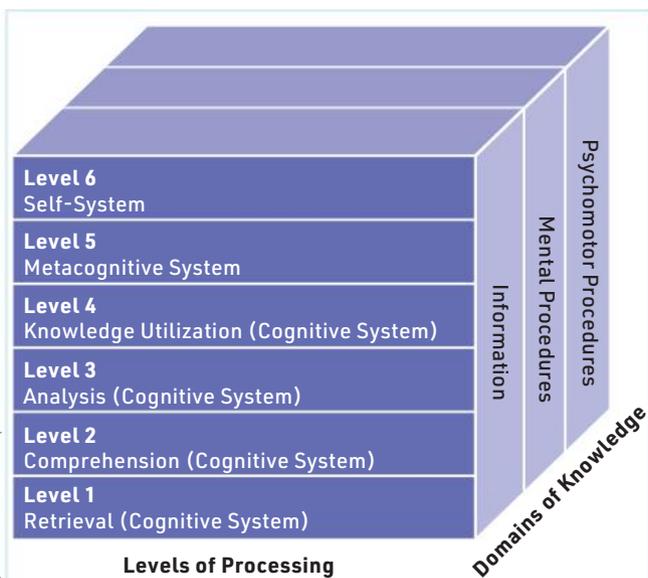
Figure 1.1 Marzano and Kendall's taxonomy (classification) of learning processes.

FTVNM cognitions

The cognitions of FTVNM involve higher-order thinking skills and creative processes, and are located predominantly in the 'knowledge utilisation' category of cognitions.

In FTVNM, some cognitive processes occur prior to others – for instance, to **resolve**, students must first **create**. Higher-order cognitive processes such as **analyse** contain the stepping stones of other cognitions. For example, students must first *describe* and then *interpret*. These cognitive stepping stones are reflected in assessment marking guides (ISMGs, see page 5).

In FTVNM, the following six cognitions are used as 'objectives' of the syllabus to structure units, subject matter and assessment.

Weblink
Film, Television & New Media General senior syllabus ©QCAA 2024

Design

The **design** cognition involves *selecting* codes and conventions to create representations; using pre-production formats (e.g. scripts, storyboards, treatments) to *plan* moving-image media products; and *justifying* choices about production decisions.

Create

Create, as a cognition, asks students to *use* production processes to *realise* a pre-production plan through deliberate selection and manipulation of appropriate production technologies (e.g. cameras and audio equipment) and post-production processes (e.g. editing software).

Resolve

The **resolve** cognition involves demonstrating creative purpose and addressing the key concepts. This involves impactful use of languages (e.g. technical and symbolic codes) to communicate intended representations to audiences. Students refine their own production practices through resolving.

Apply literacy skills

Applying literacy skills involves communicating effectively and requires *selection* of suitable FTVNM terminology and language conventions (grammar, spelling, sentence structure, punctuation) for the context, purpose or genre, as well as *using* referencing conventions and citations to acknowledge others' ideas and information.

Analyse

Analysis requires students to *examine* the construction of moving-image media products within different contexts of production (e.g. institutional and technological) and use (e.g. target audiences) and 'unpack codes and conventions' (QCAA, 2024) to *interpret* how languages create representations. Students *dissect* moving-image
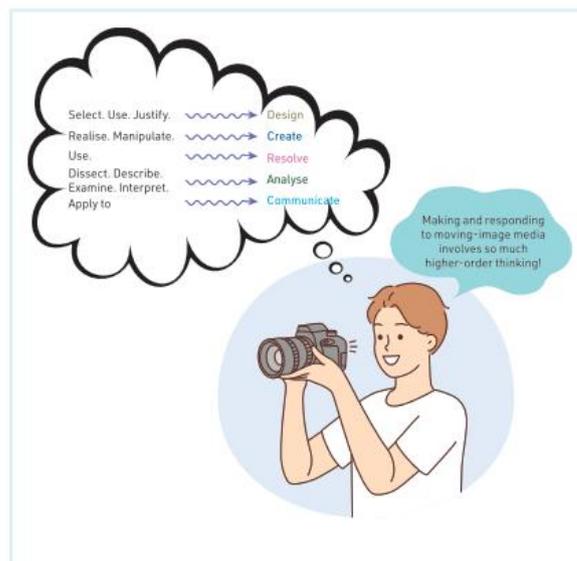
Figure 1.2 FTVNM is a rigorous, challenging and rewarding subject requiring significant higher-order thinking skills. The processes in understanding and making moving-image media products require complex skills in problem-solving and decision-making, critical and creative thinking, and effective communication.

media products into component parts, accurately *describing* characteristics and *interpreting* meaning.

Evaluate

Evaluation involves making judgements and drawing conclusions, and *justifying* these through research and *examination* of moving-image media. Evaluation also involves *reflecting* on one's own practice.

Using awareness of the cognitions to improve your marks

Understanding how cognitions function in QCAA's ATAR system can help senior students in Queensland enhance their learning and results. Cognitions focus on how we think and process information, which is essential for success in studies and assessments.

Each cognition informs the assessment marking criteria (ISMGs), so grasping their expectations is crucial for knowing how you will be evaluated. For example, developing skills in analysis and evaluation is key to meeting the external exam criteria. Recognising the characteristics of each cognition allows students to self-assess their work and identify areas for improvement.

To assist students in strategically using cognitions for assessment preparation, the activities in this book are structured according to the six FTVNM cognitive objectives and their associated thinking skills.

1.1 ACTIVITIES

1   For each of the six cognitions in the FTVNM syllabus (outlined earlier), draw a non-verbal representation of the thinking process involved in that cognition. Using this as your pre-production plan, select production technologies to **create** a short wordless video illustrating each cognition.

THE KEY CONCEPTS AND THE CONTEXTS OF PRODUCTION AND USE

The five key concepts

In Year 12, the key concepts take on a special significance as they are an essential part of the

learning and appear in the school-based assessment tasks and marking guides. They also appear in the external exam.

The key concepts allow the study of the media in broad areas of investigation, as follows:

- **Technologies.** The technologies of production, distribution and reception are integral parts of the media themselves. They are the tools and the processes used to create media products. How we receive a communication determines how we use it and has an impact on what it means.
- **Representations.** What we see through the media is not reality, but a 're-presentation' of reality. It is constructed from various selection decisions made by the producers. The way the media construct a view of the world provides an insight into their relationship with society.
- **Audiences.** While members of the audience may not immediately think of themselves as part of the equation, without them the media would have no meaning. Audiences consist of individuals and groups. The media products are made for them, and audiences make meaning of them.
- **Institutions (industries and organisations).** Media products are influenced by the
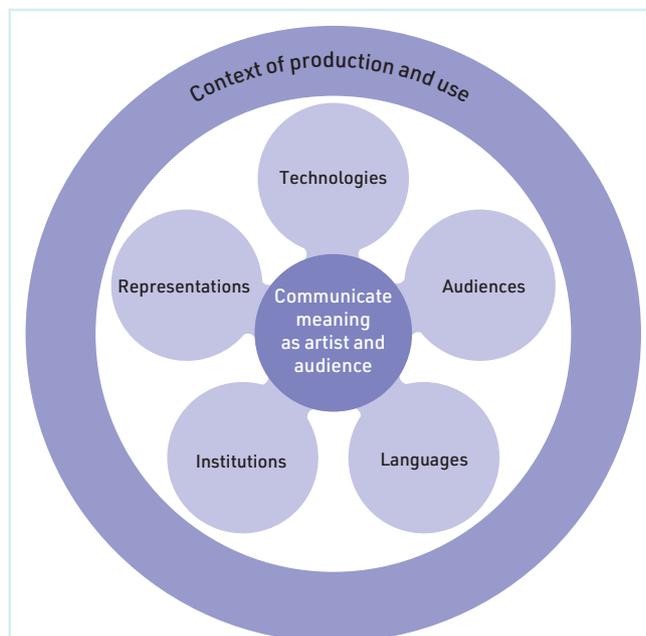
Figure 1.3 A graphic from the QCAA General Senior Syllabus shows the interrelationship between each of the key concepts in the subject FTVNM. Moving-image media can be investigated from the perspective of each of the key concepts. The key concept acts as a lens to look through. The whole system should be considered in the contexts of production and use.

organisations that produce them. Roles involved in assembling the products have an impact on the style of the product. Patterns of ownership and government regulation also have a significant effect. Institutions make it possible to have media products. Institutions also limit what is produced – whether by cost limitations, regulations or just inability to 'think outside of the square'. Institutions enable and constrain production and use.

- **Languages.** The media have their own way of looking at the world. Each uses a specialised language, whether visual or written. Media products have distinctive ways of telling stories; they have particular narratives and recognisable genres. Moving-image media languages are the systems of signs, codes and conventions that help to create the meanings we get from media products.

The contexts of production and use

The context is the surrounding environment of the text. In the subject FTVNM, the context has two parts: the contexts of production and the contexts of use (or reception).

Contexts of production

When language, the time of production, nationality, organisation, government regulations and all other factors of a production environment are combined, they create the context. Context refers to all the natural, cultural and social aspects of an environment that help shape the final meaning of a text.

- **Time of production.** The time of production is an influence, irrespective of the setting, because the image must appeal to the audience of the time. Narratives, production designs, embedded beliefs – everything has to suit audience tastes in the time the media text is marketed.
- **Natural and landscape aspects.** Natural aspects of a context include the geographical and landscape factors at play in the development of a particular setting. However, the natural aspects of a contextual environment are difficult to separate from the cultural aspects. For example, the western genre could probably only have developed in the USA. America has a fertile west; Australia's west is largely desert. New Zealand and England do not have that type of environment at all.

- **Cultural context.** The cultural aspects of a context include language, history, values and beliefs, the economic system, technology and the customs of a particular community or civilisation.
- **Social context.** The social context describes the social interactions of people around a particular text. The social context of a media product includes the nature of the individuals who are communicating, as well as the medium they choose to communicate through. It also includes the type of subject matter chosen. Roles and relationships within the organisation also affect the context and therefore the text.

Contexts of use

The contexts of reception and consumption are the surrounding circumstances in which a media text is consumed or used. The reception context includes the following.

- **Platform and technology used to consume the media product.** The kind of experience a media text can offer depends on the technology and platform used to present it. For example, the experience of watching a movie in an IMAX cinema is quite different from that of watching a movie on a small screen on the back of a seat on an aircraft.
- **Surrounding environment of the audience.** The space chosen to consume the text can influence its reception. For instance, the formal space of a darkened cinema offers a different experience from that offered by the informal environment of a family lounge room or a teenager's bedroom.
- **Time of day.** Media texts are often designed to be consumed at certain times of the day.
- **Individual personality and life history of the audience member.** The life histories and recent experiences of the audience can affect the way they interpret a film. For example, an audience member who has recently gone through a relationship break-up will view a romantic comedy differently from the way someone in a happy relationship will view it.
- **Background knowledge or cultural knowledge of the individual.** Part of the context of reception is also carried within the minds of the audience. What they perceive of the narrative image and narrative enigma can determine their state of mind when they consume the text.

1.2 ACTIVITIES

1   Select a film, television series or video game, then **analyse** one aspect from the point of view of each of the five key concepts.
2   Choose either the contexts of production or the contexts of use and **analyse** a film, television series or video game from that perspective.

MARKING GUIDES EXPLAINED

Units 3 & 4 students in General subjects in Queensland are assessed on a combination of an external exam and internal assessments. For many subjects, including FTVNM, internal school assessments contribute 75 per cent of the overall mark. The three summative tasks are combinations of creative planning, practical production and written analysis. Assignments are structured to address the objectives of design, create, resolve, apply, analyse and evaluate.

The internal assessments for FTVNM are marked according to marking guides, which are the same for all students in Queensland. The marking criteria provide specific descriptions of student work through characteristics built into the levels of achievement for each objective assessed in the task.

Teachers award provisional marks within school processes. The QCAA confirms these marks after a comparison process to ensure consistency of standards. For students with an eligible subject selection mix, FTVNM will contribute to ATAR scores for tertiary entrance purposes.

Students in schools should 'deconstruct' the marking guides to understand what is required for success in each assignment, according to the QCAA.

The cumulative stacking approach

Since 2019, The Arts syllabuses in Queensland are assessed according to a cumulative model that some refer to as 'nested criteria'. Unlike trading off descriptions to find which level is most like a student's work on average, in The Arts, a higher performance level descriptor builds on a broader performance level of a foundational understanding from below.

The 'stacked steps' of the cumulative approach means that each objective has its own staircase to the higher marks of the criteria. You must plant your metaphorical foot deliberately on each step as you climb the marks and not miss any one of the stairs. If you do not address the essential 'characteristics' in a performance level descriptor, your result is stuck on the step below.

How to have your work reach the higher standards

Each of the key elements listed in a top achievement descriptor must be evident to gain top marks. These top marks reflect higher-order thinking and skills. Students should identify and highlight the key features and cognitive verbs in the highest mark category for each objective within the task. These are your goals. The words have a particular meaning in the syllabus, so students should research the definitions and annotate the criteria to clarify meaning.

Aim to capitalise on the assignments where big marks are on offer. As students progress, incremental learning occurs with each task. The standard of work should increase as skills build. The potential marks for school-based assessments increase through Units 3 & 4.

Marks for each objective vary within a task. Written literacy skills are a very achievable strategy to gain marks in the *Apply* objective. However, successful production aspects carry the highest contribution. Being well organised significantly

Weblink
Spinal Tap lead guitarist, Nigel Tufnel: Going to 11
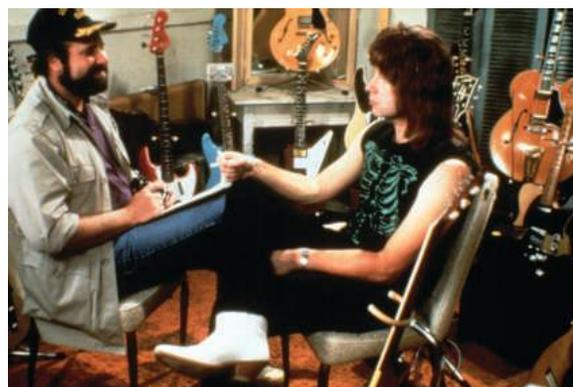
Everett Collection Inc/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 1.4 *This is Spinal Tap* (1984) is a classic **mockumentary** and **rockumentary** which started a rock meme about going the extra step for their passion. In the **parody**, the lead guitarist reveals how they have the edge on their competition. While other loud heavy metal bands can only turn up their **volume** to 10, this fictional band can go one more; their highest volume is 11!

List limitations and benefits to come to judgements, using sources. — **Top mark**

Find more examples and add proof from research and/or screen products.

Something connected to what an audience does might be evaluated.

Audience is identified for a media product to suit the assignment. — **Step 1**

Darren Sinclair; Chictype Montreal/Shutterstock.com
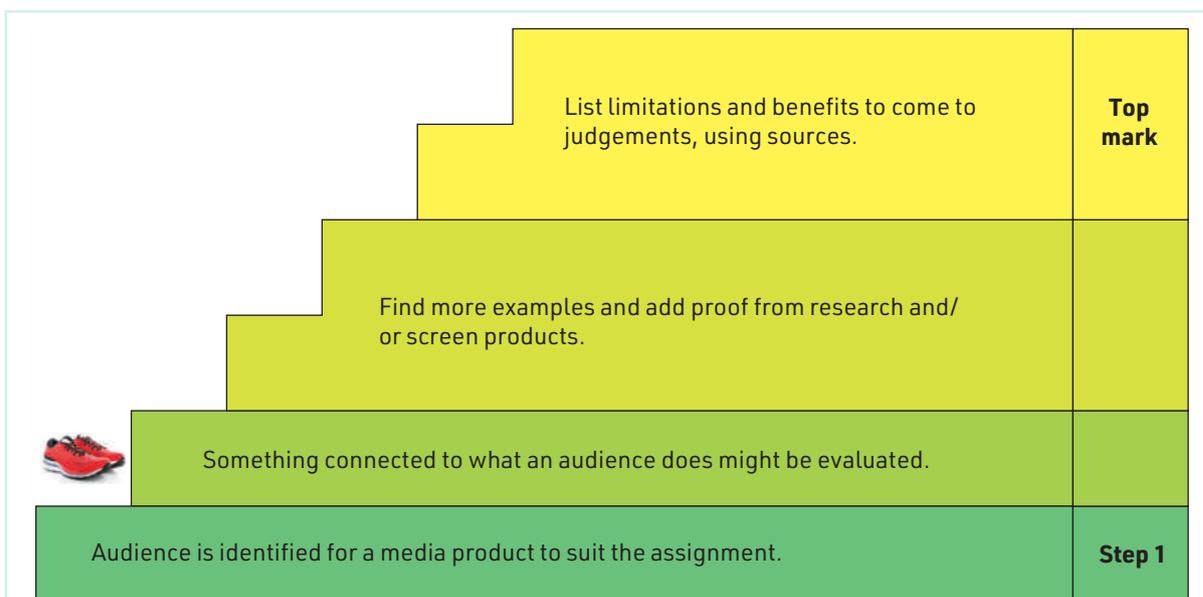
Figure 1.5 A graphic of a sample marking guide shows how the stacked achievements are seen as cumulative. Once you've identified your audience for the media product being discussed, you are on the marks staircase. Green is a good start. To reach the gold standard of the highest descriptor, you must climb every step.

assists in meeting production goals. Leaving plenty of time to problem solve and produce high quality is particularly valuable in production phases. Find passion for your project and the enthusiasm that will help you go that one extra step to hit the high point of your skills during your practical productions.

Covering off on each level

A systematic method to ensure each achievement descriptor is accounted for is to draft from the bottom up. Begin with the foundational information for gaining the first one or two marks. Move up through the levels, consolidating the demands of the characteristics needed to be evidenced before moving up.

As you tackle each descriptor, look for the 'discriminator words' that differentiate from the performance below it. This language represents increasing sophistication in the student response. For example, when required to analyse, there may be lesser demanding cognitive verbs leading up to the top responses. Students should become familiar with such definitions as:

- **Analyse:** Consider and examine to recognise patterns, meaning, similarities and differences. Understand the logic of assembled parts and how they work as a whole. Pull apart to observe and explain the workings of something.
- **Explain:** Describe in detail with additional information than what is obvious, such as related facts.
- **Identify:** Recognise what something is from a number of other possibilities. Name and find something. Place it within a set according to certain features (QCAA, 2024).

Starting from *identify*, it is possible to understand the increasing rigour needed to build up to *analyse*. Marking guides from school-based task sheets can be annotated to explain the additional requirements as students move up through the demands of the discriminator words. The left-hand margin is a good place to annotate this as instructions will often begin with a cognitive verb.

Figure 1.6 *Spinal Tap* guitar amplifiers are comically portrayed as going all the way to 11. The guitarist cannot turn up to '11' without first passing through 8, 9 and 10 on the way. Stacking achievement steps as 'nested criteria' using a cumulative model means students must conquer the lower mark descriptors before building to the next performance level, aiming to get to the top mark.

Deconstructing stacked criteria using a cumulative marking guide

The term 'glass ceiling' was originally invented to imagine invisible barriers to full participation in the workforce. The phrase caught on as many people recognised that it reflected their own experience of not rising above a certain level. Assignment criteria can also have hurdles to overcome at certain thresholds, so it is important for students to make them visible by understanding how they operate and where they might cut in to restrict results for each objective within a school-based assessment.

Missing a key step can significantly impact marks. In this process, film only rushes shot by a famous cinematographer may not be able to attain top marks, as it may be inhibited by the lack of post-filming refinement as edited media. Similarly, if audio is missing from an exported clip, the completed student film faces a huge reduction in marks.
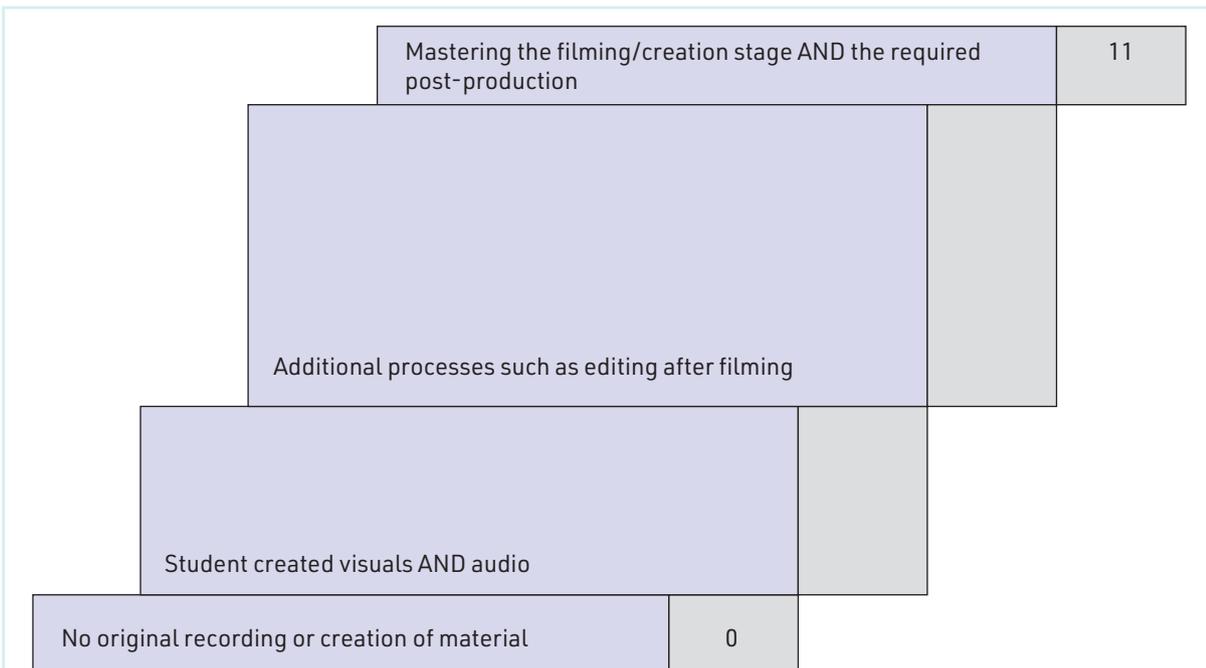
Figure 1.7 Final production assignments carry potential for high marks. The cumulative approach of stacked achievement standards brings a potential ceiling at certain thresholds similar to this diagram. These might include moving from raw footage to edited, providing audio with the video, and original material from the student. An indicative sample demonstrates how students might identify and visualise potential to overcome these hurdles.

The QCAA syllabus requirement of 'student created' is low down on the marking guide, which indicates the importance of originality. If a highly polished production does not meet the authenticity requirements for the student's own work, it may not pass the most fundamental threshold imposed by the syllabus descriptors.

Using terminology

Each subject discipline has a common language used by experts in the area of study. Key terms can refer to hardware, such as production tools, or theoretical concepts used for designing and analysing texts. Accurate terminology forms part of the literacy skills involved in the subject.

Students should determine which unit is being assessed and workshop lists of related terms and information. Look up sections in this text (as well as in *Nelson Film Television & New Media Units 1 & 2*) and the guiding

questions in the QCAA syllabus. Take note of the section headings relating to the task you are working through, as well as the information collated there. Once drafts are written, conduct a word search for key terms of the task. The precise meaning of technical terms should not be compromised and can be checked for accuracy in glossaries and specific sections dealing with each phase of production, planning format or theoretical framework.

Return to the relevant section to clarify requirements, for example:
- elements within a genre story (see *Nelson Film Television & New Media* QCE *Units 1 & 2*, Chapter 13)
- camera codes and conventions (see *Nelson Film Television & New Media* QCE *Units 1 & 2*, Chapter 4)
- pre-production formats (see *Nelson Film Television & New Media* QCE *Units 1 & 2*, Chapter 16).

1.3 ACTIVITIES

1   **Select** a school-based assignment you will complete during your course (perhaps the next one). **Locate** the descriptor for the top level of achievement. **Identify** the key terms and cognitive verbs to highlight. Annotate the marking guide with break-out boxes. **Summarise** the definitions in the left-hand margin for each one. Repeat the process for each objective assessed in your selected task.
2   **Locate** the marks total for *Units 3 & 4*. **Identify** the highest marks in one objective of the course. **Analyse** the top mark descriptors. **Identify** the most basic skills in the lower descriptors – these become non-negotiables in a cumulative marking model. **Discuss** the highly valued skills in the course in a written conclusion, evidenced by the combination of highest marks.
3   **Examine** a marking guide with a significant number of marks and descriptors, such as a production objective. **Identify** the 'discriminator words' that allow progressing up the schema. Annotate these words to expand the meaning and suggest examples that would be evident in student work for each.
4   Annotate a marking guide for a theory task (such as a case study) to **locate information** on key terms. Use break-out boxes on the right-hand margin and available space to list page numbers and subheadings to deal with the topics: initiating participation, sustaining engagement, context of production, audience interaction opportunities, technologies for participation, institutions and participation, features of participatory media.

Participation – Unit 3

UNIT INTRODUCTION

Participation is the topic of Unit 3. You will learn how people now participate in the media in unprecedented ways. Today you can be an audience member, a user and a producer all at once.

Different technologies allow participation in different ways. You will learn how traditional and emerging technologies can provide different platforms for engagement. These can either enable or constrain involvement.

You will learn how to appraise different media platforms and the audience experience that they offer. Audiences become connected in diverse ways and their experience of participation can differ considerably. Audience participation is affected by the contexts of both reception and production.

Participation is also influenced by media companies or institutions and the contexts in which they operate. You will learn how different social, political and economic factors can affect the ways media institutions operate, and how they allow audiences to participate.

By the end of Unit 3, you will have completed a case study of audience participation in moving-image media. You will have proposed a multi-platform story that invites audiences to participate. You will also have produced one aspect of this story as a moving-image media production.

AREAS OF STUDY

TECHNOLOGIES	**AUDIENCES**	**INSTITUTIONS**
How do technologies enable or constrain participation?	How do different contexts and purposes affect the participation of individuals and cultural groups?	How is participation in institutional practices influenced by social, political and economic factors?
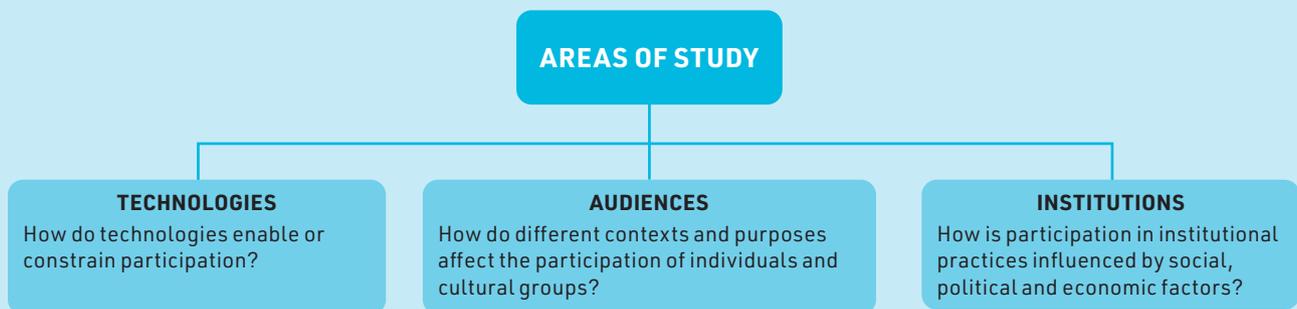
2 Participatory culture

WHAT IS MEDIA PARTICIPATION?

Think about what life was like for your grandparents or elderly people. They would not have thought anyone could start their own newspaper or make their own video channel.

Today, this is possible because of the rise of digital technology. Computers and the internet have made it possible for media to be produced relatively cheaply. Academics speak of the democratisation of media production.

This means there has been a change in power relationships. Where once the owners of the media had all the power, now it is spread a little more evenly. Everyone has the power to participate to some degree.

Participatory culture

The rapid increase in new media technology encouraging users to generate their own content has created what media scholar Henry Jenkins has termed a 'participatory culture'. In 2009, Jenkins and co-authors Ravi Purushotma, Katie Clinton, Margaret Weigel and Alice Robison wrote a white paper entitled 'Confronting the challenges of participatory culture'. Jenkins believes this culture has the following characteristics:

- low barriers to enter participation in media expression
- peer support for creating and sharing
- members who validate the contributions of others
- members who feel connected to one another.

Skills gained in participation

Henry Jenkins suggests there are a number of operational skills needed to successfully engage in a participatory culture:

- **Use and reuse media.** Participants need the ability to play, perform, simulate and reuse media content.

- **Follow flows of information.** Users need the ability to follow the flow of stories across multiple sites and media types.
- **Negotiate with others.** Social network members need the ability to network, distribute, negotiate and respect diverse opinions. They need to appreciate other perspectives and be able to collaborate successfully with others.
- **Evaluate sources.** Users need the ability to make judgements about the reliability and credibility of different information sources.

Researchers describe 'creative literacy' as the ability to creatively use technology for positive social purposes, rather than just using it to retrieve information.

Collective intelligence

Collective intelligence is the term for the sharing of knowledge across thousands or even millions of people, as occurs on the internet.

Knowledge communities such as wikis capture and organise collective intelligence (also known as 'the wisdom of crowds'). While wiki contributors may be knowledgeable, it is networking itself that brings power through organising knowledge and making it accessible. The whole intelligence collection is much more powerful than the sum of the individual knowledge.

Other social networking sites, especially those that are professional-, industry- or business-based, allow users to pool their intelligence to solve complex issues and questions, and to build vast bodies of collected and organised knowledge.

The participation gap

Participatory cultures empower people to contribute to online society in various ways where they couldn't before. However, a gap begins to form between those who embrace the digital versus those who are either resistant to the change or unable to access the required

technologies. The participation gap can affect people from economic, cultural and gender perspectives.

Economic gaps

In the digital age, many everyday tasks are done online. There are clear economic advantages for those who have access to technologies. For those who cannot afford to access these activities, the divide becomes larger. For example, workplace meetings online via Microsoft Teams or Zoom become an issue of access which disadvantages those who cannot afford it and causes a divide in the workplace.

Cultural and gender gaps

In participatory culture, the lack of varied voices and opinions from different cultures and genders increases the participation gap. There is a distinct lack of representation for those who don't have access, the skills to participate or the funds to purchase the right technologies. According to University of Nottingham academic, Younghoon Chang et al., the digital divide at the national and international levels reflects pre-existing social, economic, political and cultural inequalities. This shows that if there is already a cultural divide in the country, there will also be a participation gap.

Issues and problems

If certain cultures and genders are not provided equal opportunities to represent themselves online and are instead represented by other groups, this can lead to misrepresentation, online bias and an overrepresentation of certain points of view.

Media and participation

Participation is an important part of media consumption and ensuring audience engagement. Allowing audiences to participate beyond passive viewership provides more opportunities for audiences to go deeper into the story world.

Potential and benefits

Participation offers audiences a more intimate and engaging way to consume media. It rewards the audience for following the narrative and encourages fans to build the story world in various unique ways.

Participation in these narratives can encourage fans to take ownership over their own experience and build a strong fan following.

Issues and problems

Participation can exclude audiences who can't access the content, making them unable to gain the full experience of the narrative. Multi-platform content is designed to build on content across platforms, but this can still result in a loss of full engagement as well as an understanding of the larger narrative when they are excluded from these platforms.

Citizenship and participation

Citizenship and participation in media characterises the ways in which people can engage online to participate in their society and governance of their country. This is often linked with the user's active participation in politics and their rights within society.

Potential and benefits

Citizenship and participation allow users to engage personally with the political landscape of their society by opening online dialogues or even voting online. Henry Jenkins, Mizuko Ito and Danah Boyd note that participatory culture allows users to have a voice in their society. Users are better able to communicate with others that may share or challenge their own political views. This allows for a deeper understanding and connection to the political state of their country.

Issues and problems

Citizenship and participation offer a lot of possibilities for users to feel a sense of belonging within their society. However, this can result in oversaturated media content online with limited representations and perspectives of society and political extremism, which can impact the understanding and beliefs of the general populace.

Education and participation

Potential and benefits

The education system heavily focuses on integrating media into the curriculum with more classrooms using computers and technology. Learning about

how to use these technologies becomes an integral part of equalling opportunities for students.

Issues and problems

Some schools may have limited funding to invest in computers or new technologies, which may prevent students from accessing the tools. Understanding how to protect your identity, your created content and use online spaces safely is an essential skill in the internet age. It is also a skill that can only be understood through using the technologies themselves. Those who are unable to access the technology on a regular basis may fail to protect themselves and their content.

Ways people participate

Technologies are central to the ways people participate. The impact on interactivity is multifaceted and far-reaching. As these technologies continue to evolve, we can expect even more innovative and immersive forms of mobile interactivity to emerge.

Mobile devices

Mobile-connected devices have fundamentally transformed how people interact with digital content, physical spaces and each other. These devices, particularly smartphones, are integral to our daily lives, connecting the digital and physical worlds.

Mobile devices have transformed our urban experiences, created new possibilities for storytelling and social coordination, and changed how we perceive and interact with our environment, blurring the lines between our digital and physical realities.

Social media

Social media refers to online platforms and technologies that allow users to create, share and interact with content and with each other. These platforms have fundamentally changed how people communicate, consume information and participate in culture.

Understanding the full impact of social media requires looking beyond just cultural participation to consider the economic, political and social structures in which these platforms operate. The debate

around social media highlights tensions between its participatory potential and its embeddedness in capitalist economic structures.

Web 2.0

Web 2.0 refers to the second generation of the World Wide Web, characterised by a shift from static web pages to more dynamic, interactive and user-generated content. This evolution in web technology and design philosophy emerged in the early 2000s and has continued to transform how users interact with the internet.

The participatory culture fostered by Web 2.0 has democratised information creation and dissemination, while also presenting new challenges related to information quality, digital literacy, individual privacy, mass surveillance and online safety.

Platforms

The emergence of online **platforms** as the dominant form of information management has given rise to new forms of digital culture. Platform culture refers to the shared behaviours, norms and interactions that emerge among users within the context of online platforms or services. These platforms, such as social media networks, video-sharing sites and online forums, create unique digital environments that shape behaviour and communication patterns, a sense of identity and subjectivity, and an overall worldview.

Platforms have come to shape society not just through user-generated content, but through other vital factors such as network effects, algorithms, UI/UX design and, ultimately, platformisation.

Esports

Esports refers to competitive gaming at a professional level, involving various video game titles across different genres. Since its inception, the industry has grown significantly, attracting millions of viewers worldwide while offering accessible opportunities for anyone to participate.

Major game publishers, such as Blizzard Activision, Riot Games and Valve Corporation, played crucial roles in the esports ecosystem. The key entities involved also include game publishers,

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event organisers, professional teams and the global fanbase. Because the industry is still relatively new, it has yet to achieve the same heights as its conventional sporting counterparts.

Games

Since the 1980s, video games have grown in popularity and become one of the largest media industries today. Much like most other forms of media, video games adapted to social media conventions, embedding themselves into the participatory culture of today's online digital media. This shift created a sustained form of engagement that kept video games alive and allowed them to increase with social media. Previously, gaming was nothing more than a distraction for a short while. Today, it is a dominant form of media and mode of everyday life. It has developed into a culture that encompasses billions of users.

Why people participate

It has been suggested the reason most people participate in new media is not just to attract a mass audience. Reasons for participation include:
- **For attention or fame.** Everyone enjoys attention, and new media sites allow people to put themselves out there for the world to see.
- **To connect and 'hang out'.** New media, the internet and social networking sites can provide a sense of community and belonging, despite the fact that the community might be spread around the world. But many online friendships can also be extensions of existing real-world friendships. This often happens with online gaming.
- **Self-disclosure and ritual.** Social networking sites and the internet generally provide an unparalleled opportunity for self-disclosure, opinion and communication with small groups of friends or the entire internet. They can undertake the rituals of forming friendship and social hierarchies, which also presents vulnerabilities.
- **Building and exploring identity.** Social networks allow users to build and explore their identity – whether authentic or fictional.

Types of participation

In the participatory culture of the modern internet, users, producers, consumers and corporations are all interacting together in an online world. However, there are different power relationships and different types of participation. Media theorist Mirko Tobias Schafer distinguishes between explicit and implicit participation.

Explicit participation

Explicit participation is intentional and driven by motivated users. It is a creative activity, and the creators could range from unskilled beginners to professional producers. Explicit participation occurs when content creators make and upload a video to YouTube, contribute to Wikipedia, create vlogs or post to TikTok. It occurs when users participate in esports and make conscious decisions to be involved and collaborate.

Implicit participation

Implicit participation is unconscious participation. It happens by means of software design and easy-to-use interfaces with complex algorithms running behind the scenes. Implicit participation happens when the software draws on users' habits and then uses them to generate data. It might be watching videos on YouTube or TikTok and passively consenting to being tracked and then being presented with other similar material.

Figure 2.1 Explicit participation occurs when users make conscious decisions to upload content, be involved or collaborate. Esports is an example of explicit participation. Former FTVNM student Jordan Mays hosts international esports conventions and has built a following as 'Elfishguy' through a presence on X, Liquipedia and YouTube.

Participatory producers, consumers and users

New media has changed the old patterns of media production, distribution and consumption. In the past, traditional media was disseminated within the mass-media model whereby a number of controlling producers broadcasted their content to a large number of consumers and audiences at the same time. New digital media, on the other hand, disseminates content via the internet through a peer-to-peer model.

The prosumer

In the past, audiences were typically thought of as simple consumers of media. They did not produce media. However, American futurist Alvin Toffler began to think about how audiences can also embody the role of producers when they customise what they consume. Combining the words 'producer' and 'consumer' to create the portmanteau (combination word) 'prosumer', Toffler argued that audiences had evolved beyond being consumers and were taking ownership of their consumption in various ways.

In social media today, the prosumer might create content within the constraints of a platform's features (e.g. Instagram filters or TikTok challenges), while at the same time consuming content of a similar nature.

The prod-user

The term 'prod-user' was coined by Queensland University of Technology academic Axel Bruns in 2008. Its origin is in the two words 'producer' and 'user'.

The 'prod-user' refers to a more modern context whereby internet users can embody the role of a media producer and a media user in a collaborative context. Prod-users are often associated with wikis and other collaborative platforms. The typical prod-user collaborates and continuously builds and extends the media product. Collaboration is the defining difference between a prod-user and a prosumer.

Features of produsage

Axel Bruns has isolated four features of the prod-user in action:
- **Open participation.** Content is created by prod-users using collaboration and peer-to-peer

Figure 2.2 The first logo from the 'Broadcast Yourself' era of YouTube (2005–2011). Subtle changes were made to the logo until it was fully revised in 2017. YouTube represents the classic case of 'produsage' – the tagline 'Broadcast Yourself' makes a direct call to the producer-user. Someone with a YouTube account who uploads videos and also consumes the videos that are generally available is considered a prod-user.

Gary Lucken/Alamy Stock Photo

sharing. These peers may be real-life friends, or they may just collaborate online.
- **Fluid group organisation.** People work together on projects, doing the parts they are good at. There does not need to be formal role allocation.
- **Always in draft stage.** Often the content made by prod-users is unfinished and in a state of perpetual updating. Bruns points to Wikipedia as an example of this aspect of produsage. A topic entry may be created by one user but can be overwritten by another and then another.
- **Unclear copyright.** Because there are often so many users involved in producing content, copyright becomes a difficult issue to establish. This complexity does not mean, however, that there is no copyright protection.

Key differences between the prod-user and the prosumer

The differences between the two terms are subtle, but are as follows.
- **Origin.** Prosumer emerged from consumer culture studies, while prod-user came from digital media studies.
- **Agency.** Prosumers often work within predefined systems, while prod-users have more agency in shaping the systems they use.
- **Collaboration.** Produsage emphasises collaborative content creation more strongly than prosumption. Prosumers, such as social media influencers, are often seen to be working independently.

- **Continuity.** Produsage implies ongoing, iterative content development, while 'prosumption' can be more episodic.

In social media contexts, these distinctions can blur. A Facebook user might be seen as a prosumer when they create content using the platform's tools, but as a prod-user when they contribute to evolving community norms or collaborative projects within the same platform.

User- and loser-generated content

As users participate in the media, they generate content. Whether this is a positive or negative for them is a matter of perspective.

- **User-generated content.** The modern internet allows people to participate in the production and distribution of their own media. When this is uploaded via produsage, it is called user-generated content. Blogging and the creation of wikis have become some of the most popular forms of user-generated content.
- **Loser-generated content.** Unfortunately, the internet offers lots of people the opportunity to benefit from the work of others. Content that is generated and shared (often with good intentions) and then exploited for profit by the greedy is termed loser-generated content. By the same process, many young people are involved in working for relatively small returns or profit shares while big companies take the majority of the money. For instance, the microblogging platform and social networking website Tumblr was sold for $US1.1 billion in 2013, but the users who provided the content did not receive any profits from the sale.

The AI prod-user

AI systems, particularly large language models and generative AI, can be viewed as prod-users that exist in the digital landscape, aligning with Bruns' concept of collaborative and continuous content building. AI systems work alongside human users, and they are not just tools used to create content. They blur the lines between tool and collaborator, and embody the produsage principle of ongoing, iterative content development. While as yet lacking in human-like agency, AI can shape digital environments through recommendation systems and other mechanisms, much like human prod-users. Most generative AI platforms are already collaborative platforms, where AI enhances content creation, editing and curation, contributing to the evolution of content and playing a role in developing and enforcing community norms.

However, the integration of AI into produsage ecosystems introduces new complexities and challenges. Questions arise regarding authorship and attribution in AI–human collaborative content creation. There's a need for robust quality control mechanisms to ensure the accuracy and reliability of AI-generated or AI-assisted content. Moreover, the incorporation of AI into these systems may shift power dynamics, potentially centralising control in the hands of AI developers and deployers. As AI continues to evolve, its role in produsage ecosystems is likely to become increasingly significant and nuanced, both extending and challenging traditional concepts of digital collaboration and content creation.

2.1 ACTIVITIES

1   Research a well-known musician who began by posting their performances on YouTube. **Analyse** the various stages of their career and **evaluate** their rise to fame across platforms, **providing information** about the sequences of events. **Create** a timeline documenting their progress from unknown to fame. On the timeline, place illustrative examples of the building of the fan base.

2   Survey the class to see how many people fit into the category of prod-user. Include some of the following questions:
- Have you uploaded videos to an online sharing site? If so, how many views have you had?
- Do you provide online commentary on videos or games?
- Do you contribute to an online discussion group?
- In what context do you participate – school, home, with friends, etc.?
- What enjoyment do you get out of this kind of participation?

Respond to the areas of investigation in the following table.

▶

EVALUATE	ANALYSE	CREATE
Evaluate results to **interpret** user behaviour in the different contexts. **Evaluate** results by **drawing conclusions** around the **worth** of user enjoyment of participation.	**Analyse** quantitative (numerical) results, **considering** percentages for each constituent part of the survey. **Analyse** qualitative (interview) results by **interpreting responses** and **examining** any similarities or differences. Try fluoro-highlighting all similar responses and seeking trends.	**Create** a timeline documenting the progress of a musical artist who gained celebrity through YouTube. **Create** a timeline with illustrative examples of the building of a fan base.

3 **Evaluate** social media, **drawing some conclusions** about the degree to which it has brought positives or negatives into your life. How significant an influence has it been in your life?

4 Thinking about the participation gap, consider a time that you were unable to participate in an activity due to one of the reasons listed. **Describe** what you did to overcome this. Describe how you would do anything differently if you had that time over again. If you cannot recall such a scenario, **consider** what solutions might theoretically be available for some of the issues mentioned.

5 Make a list of the ways in which you have used the collective intelligence of the internet to solve a problem you have had in the past week.
   Evaluate the significance of any dangers in relying on the internet in this way.

SPACED PRACTICE

Stimulus: Interactive media marketing campaign by Apple TV series *Severance* (2022–)

Contextual information: The article in the stimulus discusses the creative interactive marketing campaign the television series *Severance* (2022–) prepared for the release of Season 2 in 2025. The actors were taken to a popular transit station in America, set up their office space and (in character) began to work. This was quickly shared onto various social media platforms by multiple passing commuters, creating free marketing.

Question (Key concept – Audiences): Analyse the techniques Apple TV has used to market the release of Season 2. **Evaluate** the effectiveness of the promotion both through interactive means and through social media. **Justify** your response with examples from their social media campaign and interactive marketing stunt.

Weblink
More TV shows need to take a page from *Severance's* marketing: Collider

Resource
Scaffolding

3 Audiences engaging and sustaining participation

AUDIENCES AND PARTICIPATION IN MULTI-PLATFORM MEDIA

Users of multi-platform media arrived on the scene at a particular moment when technology and new industry approaches have come together. It is much easier than it ever has been to switch between platforms or to involve yourself in fan activities.

Multi-platform consumption is the 'dedicated consumption of a narrative across multiple story worlds', says Emma Beddows of Swinburne University, Melbourne. Users are people who involve themselves actively in the content and communicate with others around the world. Users are often highly digitally literate and migrate from one platform to another.

The world of multi-platform media is a great place for users, but it can also be a chance for large commercial enterprises to exploit consumers. Participation is often highly structured by the companies. It is a means of ensuring that audience members add to company profits. Users become commodities that can be exploited when they upload their own content to company sites or when they create identities using company properties. Users also become audiences to be sold to advertisers.

Multi-platform media encourage new ways of using media. They encourage users to actively seek out ways of participating with the text. It gives users some degree of control.

Features of the multi-platform experience

Beddows suggests the multi-platform media experience has the following features:
- **Requires effort.** A narrative in the cinema just happens on the screen, no matter what you are doing in your seats. However, a multi-platform media product requires users to shift platforms

and follow their text around to different places. The user is important in the construction of meaning. Multi-platform media requires users to put in the effort of the physical and mental movement between platforms, and to actively assemble all the parts of the story in their heads.
- **Is expansionary or additive.** More and more content can be added to multi-platform media texts. Different but connected stories can unfold on different platforms. Details of characters' lives can be played out on separate platforms while still remaining part of the one whole story.
- **Has gaps.** Missing pieces of a story, or extra details that have to be pieced together, are spaces that must be closed by users. Gaps in the story plots, with the details filled in on different platforms, are what invite interaction and participation from users, according to Beddows. However, it is often the case that the users are not in control of these gaps. It is the copyright holder (usually a big company) that holds the power to influence the story structure.
- **Has multiple entry points.** Users enter multi-platform texts at any one of a number of different points. It might be via television, cinema or a digital game. The type of entry point often depends on the user's level of engagement, according to multi-platform specialist, designer and writer Christy Dena of The University of Melbourne. Extra entry points include fan sites, forums, fan databases or Google.

The original creators and copyright holders (often a large media company) will not have complete control over all these entry points, says Dena. The *Pokémon* franchise is an example where the creators have set up multiple entry points based on the age of the users.

The Matrix film franchise was one of the first successful multi-platform texts involving a major movie. It offered the original movie,

Resource
Key concept test

web comics, a computer game, an anime and a massively multi-player online role-playing game (MMORPG). It is unknown where different fans made their first entry. For example, some fans may have played the game *Enter the Matrix* (2003) and never seen the film. Another complex multi-platform franchise is *The Witcher* franchise. *The Witcher* started as a novel first published in Poland. Multiple novels and English translation followed, then comic books, video games, film and television series and RPG, board and card games.

Evaluating the audience's use of multi-platform media

Good multi-platform media experiences invite the user into multiple linked stories that exist as part of an overall story universe, according to Henry Jenkins, Provost Professor at the University of Southern California.

Academic Emma Beddows suggests that multi-platform media audiences can be examined and evaluated in three ways: entry points, mode of engagement and level of engagement.

1 Entry points

The design of entry points into the story world is a major part of the process of building a multi-platform experience.

The selection of a point of entry empowers the audience because they can consume the story in the way they want to. This also means the audience has the choice of engaging with it on one platform only and may only consume one aspect of the story and go no further.

Age-related entry points are a common approach to large franchise multi-platform productions, such as those centred on blockbuster films. For example, a movie could have a PG classification, yet its partner digital game could be rated M. Different age ranges have access to different technologies.

Since it is the user who chooses the entry point, they have the power to construct their own view of the story world based on the platform they are most familiar with.

2 Mode of engagement or participation

People often prefer a particular mode of engagement. They may prefer something that offers them a
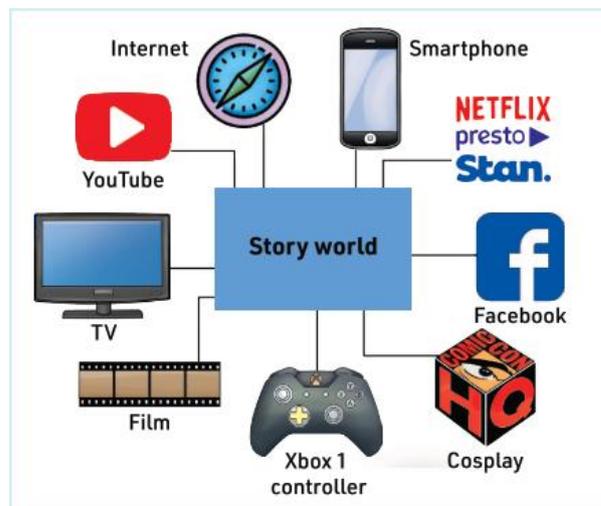
Figure 3.1 Audiences can choose the entry point into a story world based on their preferred platform. Writers and designers must be aware that most users will not go far from the initial entry point. Users can also enter by any point without reference to the story on other platforms.

high degree of control, such as a digital game, or something that offers a low degree of control, such as a movie that allows them to sit back and have the story presented to them.

Movies (at the cinema or on other platforms), television programs and short videos involve the viewer in a whole range of mental activities as they interpret meaning. Emotional responses, such as laughter or joy, come with that. Viewers may also experience actual physical responses, such as increased heart rate or even small jumping reactions. Regardless of their response, the film or video continues.

Digital games only proceed if the user engages with the computer and interacts with it in a physical and mental way. Games are dependent on the actions of the audience and their decision-making processes.

Audiences are not necessarily comfortable moving from one kind of engagement to the other. Alternatively, they may want some of the emotional engagement they get from the cinema to be extended to high-control platforms such as games.

3 Level of engagement or participation

Media industries are in a period of unprecedented change. As audiences become fragmented, they become much smaller for individual media products. Many in the industry see that profits can be improved if audiences are more engaged and may be much more valuable than large mass audiences.

Table 3.1 Tiers of involvement in multi-platform media, by Cameron Cliff of Queensland University of Technology.

TIERS OF INVOLVEMENT	DESCRIPTION
Low	These audience members engage briefly. They are too busy or uninterested to invest much time.
Medium	These audience members invest some time and energy to interact with others or find additional platforms.
High	These audience members drive conversation and seek out, share or curate extra content on available platforms.

Source: With permission Dr Cameron Cliff

Engagement is a process that can take place across a range of different platforms and media texts, including fan texts and discussion forums. Engagement with media can be defined as the depth and nature of a user's investment in a media product. A user's engagement is the sum total of their behaviours, attitudes and desires in relation to a media product.

Engagement can be described as connectedness – a relationship of varying intensity. Connectedness is based on the degree to which a media product is involved in the user's personal and social experiences. It can also be expressed as a relationship to a media product that can be shown in a range of behaviours and attitudes, says Beddows.

According to Beddows, appraising engagement can be done by placing users' responses on a scale for each of the following: loyalty, attentive consumption, media literacy, participation and activities beyond the text.

- **Loyalty.** Loyalty is a form of commitment. For audiences, it involves returning regularly to media products. It also suggests discrimination on the basis of personal taste. Loyalty is very important in multi-platform media because users are required to migrate across several different media platforms.

- **Attentive consumption.** Consumption, says specialist in media engagement Ivan Askwith, can be 'passive monitoring, rapt immersion, and everything in between'. He suggests that attentiveness can be measured by asking users to recall details of the story afterwards.

- **Media literacy.** The ability to operate, code and decode media is referred to as **media literacy**. Media literacy is important because the lack of it can prevent audiences from moving across platforms. For example, if someone cannot play digital games, they will not migrate from the video or film platforms.

- **Participation.** Actively participating is something that people must want to do. However, the platform has to allow interactivity as well. Participation is voluntary, and interactivity is often built into the technology.

- **Activities beyond the main text.** Activities that are based on the media product but are not actually consuming the product are considered to be activities beyond the text. Cosplay is an example; participants may have dressed up for a convention, but they are not necessarily consuming the text at the same time.

3.1 ACTIVITIES

1 Select a well-known existing media product or narrative franchise that has a strong multi-platform presence. Use your knowledge and information from research to respond to the areas of activity in the following table.

DESCRIBE	DESIGN	EVALUATE
Describe the multiple entry points on different platforms that the media product has, using a diagram to **represent** the information.	**Design** a narrative plan of the product, **systematically assembling** the elements of the story. **Design** a series of 'break out' points on the plan where there are gaps in the story encouraging movement to another platform.	**Evaluate** the relative success of the full suite of multi-platform media, **systematically examining** box office data and **interpreting** the audience statistics.

2 In pairs, discuss your preferred mode of engagement with a multi-platform story. **Describe** your preferred mode and provide an example as to how you have used it. **Compare** your preferred mode to that of your partner.

3 **Design** from your imagination a proposal for a possible multi-platform story. **Describe** the audience entry points and any gaps in the story that encourage movement across to other platforms. **Arrange** the multi-platform aspects of the story in a diagram. **Design** a narrative plan showing how elements of the story are told to audiences across different platforms. **Design** proposals for three ways that audiences can interact with the story.

4 **Evaluate** the level of engagement an audience member has with a multi-platform product, **making judgements** using the areas of engagement outlined by Emma Beddows (see page 17): loyalty, attentive consumption, media literacy, participation and activities beyond the text.

HOW CONTEXTS AND PURPOSES OF USE AFFECT PARTICIPATION

Consider an advertisement aimed at women that ran on a single network channel on prime-time television in the 1960s. The advertisers could count on that ad reaching 80 per cent of all women in the country. Even if only a small percentage of people responded to the ad, the profits were huge.

Today, it is estimated that to reach the same number of people, the ad would have to run on a hundred different media platforms – without taking into account the various ways that audiences can avoid ads these days.

The mass audience has fragmented into a million different groupings and small communities. Fragmentation means that a large mass audience is no longer taken for granted.

Mass audiences still exist. The success of such programs as *Game of Thrones* (R-rated, 2011–2019), *Stranger Things* (2016–2025) and *Andor* (2022–2025) proves that a huge world audience is still possible.

Figure 3.2 In the 1960s, an ad on a prime-time television show could be expected to reach up to 80 per cent of the population. Today, for the same effect, it would need to be on a hundred media platforms.

Patrick de Grijs/Alamy Stock Photo

Audience contexts

There are three broad contexts that affect how audiences consume media products: audience availability, structure of the media environment and group viewing.

Availability to consume

Audience availability refers to the time that people have to view media products. People use the media when they have the time and the possibility of access. Most people's lives are busy, and therefore their available time for media consumption is limited.

Often. the opportunity that people have to view media is more significant than the type of program. Some studies have shown that people just watch at set times of the day. They may choose to download

their favourite show at this time, but often they just watch whatever is available.

Viewer availability is usually stable on a day-by-day, week-by-week basis. Availability can depend on work or school commitments, as well as other personal commitments.

Media structure

Whether or not the audience has access to a range of media platforms determines the way that they can use media products. For example, if you are not subscribed to a video on-demand service, such as Netflix or Stan, you will not be able to access a range of content. In some remote areas of Australia, remote communities face limited media choices.

A high-choice media context, such as a city, allows users to actively access a range of media platforms. Users can consume their preferred media content quite easily.

Movement across platforms is encouraged by multi-platform media storytelling. **Migratory consumption** is the consumption of media products by starting on one platform and 'migrating' to others. Commercial organisations encourage migratory consumption whereby users move to new platforms and different aspects of the story. Migratory consumption is necessary to follow the flow of content across multiple media platforms.

Group contexts

Media consumption is often a social event where family members and friendship groups view together. Digital games are often played socially. This context transforms individual choices about media consumption into what is called 'socially negotiated choice'. If you are consuming media in a group, you may access content that the group prefers, even if it is not your preference. For example, a sports-oriented person may be convinced to view soap operas if they are with a group who are viewing them. Without this viewing context, they may have chosen to watch sport instead.

The presence of co-viewers has a considerable impact on the viewing patterns of audience members. In an individual viewing context, users might be disinterested in the content; however, with co-viewers, they might show interest.

Demographic groups and different purposes of use

The real products of the media are audiences, who are then marketed to advertisers. The texts are to attract the unsuspecting population. However, participation in the moving-image media can be affected by membership of audience groupings or demographic characteristics.

The term 'demographics' is derived from the Greek words *demos* meaning 'people' and *graphe* meaning 'writing'. **Demography** is the study of human populations and their characteristics. In the media, 'demographics' refers to the characteristics of target audiences.

The media accumulate vast amounts of data about who consumes their products. Profiles of audiences include details of income, education level, lifestyle, marital status and age. The media even know how many households have cats rather than dogs. The audience profile is used to convince advertisers that they will be targeting the correct type of audience. Advertisers pay a lot of money for a high-income audience, even if it is only small, whereas low-income audiences are worthwhile only if they are purchased in bulk quantities.

Demographic groups

Media organisations have built up 'people maps' of the population, based on factors such as social class, age, sex, education, religion and family size. Advertisers use these people maps to target their ads. To find the target audience, the advertiser then matches the ad data and statistics with the media organisation's data. The data must be kept up to date. Advertisers' people maps are constantly changing as society changes and audiences shift.

Figure 3.3 Audiences can be targeted by demography based on their characteristics. Media products are then created to target specific groups.

Demographics of generations

Different **generations** have different experiences of life. These experiences affect participation in the media. Media executives have divided the audience into generation categories based on their year of birth, as shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Western audience categories based on year of birth

GENERATION	BIRTH DATE*	SIGNIFICANT MEDIA	DEMOGRAPHIC AND PSYCHOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS
'Greatest' Generation	1901–23	Newspapers	• People born at the turn of the 20th century. • Fought in the Second World War and kept the home front going. • Rebuilt society and industry after the war. • Seen as being used to hardship and sacrifice.
Silent Generation	1924–44	Radio	• People born between the two world wars, but too young to fight in the Second World War. • Experienced the Great Depression as children. • Seen as often conventional, fatalistic, hardworking, expecting disappointment.
Baby Boomers	1945–64	Television	• People born after the Second World War as soldiers came home and established families. • First to grow up with television. • Came of age in the 1960s and 1970s. • Some were part of the 1960–70s counter-culture and hippie movement. • Many became more conservative in middle age. • Tend to think of themselves as a special generation, different to those before them.

Generation X	1965–81	MTV	• People born after the Baby Boomers and often seen as living in their shadow.
			• Lived through periods of recession and restructuring in western economies.
			• Often had significant periods of unemployment in their youth.
			• First generation to experience parents' divorce on a large scale.
			• Sometimes divided into subgroups:
			  – Baby busters 1965–79
			  – MTV generation 1975–80

Generation Y or Millennials	1982–95	The internet	• People born into Baby Boomer families and came of age around the turn of the 21st century (therefore sometimes called 'Millennials'). • As the children of Baby Boomers, sometimes called 'Echo Boomers'. • First generation to grow up with computers, the internet and digital communication, but remember a time before. • As a media audience, they are more segmented.
Generation Z	1996–2010	Smartphones	• People born after Generation Y and even more used to technology. • Grew up with smartphones, video games and the internet. • Often said to be technology obsessed. • Very segmented media interests and are used to diversity. • Very highly educated.
Generation Alpha	2011–	Social media	• The most technologically literate generation. • As a whole, the most affluent. • Heavy users of mobile devices. • Heavy users of social media. • Often negatively affected by social media.

*Different demographers use different cut-off dates for the generations. Even some of the more obvious generational starting points are debated. For example, not all demographers agree that the end of the Second World War is the start of the Baby Boomer generation: some say 1943 and others say 1947. For various reasons, the cut-off dates for all subsequent generations are equally debatable.

Figure 3.4 *Oh My God* sculpture by Lucy Vader at 'Sculpture by the Sea' festival, Cottesloe Beach, Perth. 'OMG' was one of the favourite sayings of Generation Z – the generation who grew up with the smartphone. Generation Z is considered the most highly educated generation yet and with the most segmented media tastes.

Figure 3.5 The seven ages of man, starting with infancy and ending in old age. The ages of man are outlined in Shakespeare's play *As You Like It*. Jaques in Act II Scene VII begins the monologue with the famous phrase 'All the world's a stage …' Age group is one aspect of audience demography and has an impact on media participation.

Demographics of social class

The most desirable audience for advertisers is the audience who will and can spend most. Spending power can also affect the degree of participation in the media. Generally, high-income households participate in media more often than low-income households. Accordingly, advertisers have devised various scales of relative spending power. They generally follow the divisions found in university research into social class in Australia. While most Australians (52 per cent) define themselves as middle class, an Australian National University analysis has made the following divisions:

- **Established wealthy.** Without necessarily having high levels of education, this group tends to be independently wealthy and have prestigious social networks. They have high intergenerational advantage and high levels of property assets.
- **Emerging wealthy.** This group tends to be younger, but has high levels of educational achievement. They have high incomes and are highly involved in the cultural scene. Their parents often had high levels of education as well. They may work in technical fields, professional services or other highly paid industries.
- **Mobile middle class.** With 25 per cent of the population, the mobile middle class is quite a large group. They have higher levels of educational attainment and therefore tend to earn higher incomes and have larger property assets.

- **Established middle class.** This group forms about 26 per cent of the population. They do not have high levels of educational qualifications but do have middle-level occupational prestige. They typically have average levels of property assets.
- **Established working class.** Forming about 24 per cent of the population this group typically works in low-prestige jobs and has the lowest household incomes and the least property assets. They also have the least educational qualifications. Little wealth is available to be passed on from previous generations as they too worked in these occupations.
- **Precariat.** Combining the words precarious and proletariat (working class) has resulted in the name for this group. They are often pensioners or social welfare recipients.

Demographics of values segments

Some advertisers categorise people based on the values they hold. There are many different versions of these. Roy Morgan market research and statistics have developed the 'Values Segments' model.

- **Socially aware consumers** are highly educated, idealistic and community-minded. They have a strong sense of social responsibility. Common occupations include public servants, politicians, researchers and teachers.
- **Visible achievement consumers** are those who have been highly successful in their fields and even become quite wealthy as a result. They tend to have traditional values and conservative views on society, the family and work. These people feel fully in control of their lives and only really take

Weblink
Roy Morgan: Values Segments

an interest in the economy or politics when it affects them.

- **Young optimists** are image conscious and ambitious about their futures. They are interested primarily in experiences. They are innovative, involved with technology and dream of working overseas.
- **Real conservatives** are people who believe in well-established traditions, good order and quality brands. They are loyal to friends and to trusted brands. They hold conservative views about society and tend to think that things are not as good as they used to be.
- **'Look at me' consumers** spend money on fast food, music and socialising. Peer group opinion is important to them.
- **Conventional family life consumers** spend most of their income supporting their family and creating a home. They generally seek value for money.
- **'A fairer deal' consumers** often feel they've got a rough deal in life. They consume a lot of television or video games. They are often struggling financially and want an escape.
- **Something better consumers** are always looking out for something bigger, better or more desirable. They often over-extend themselves financially and need to reduce spending where it won't be seen. They often compare themselves to other people.
- **Basic needs consumers** are mostly concerned about 'just getting by'. According to Roy Morgan research, these people are often quite happy and content. They tend to have a strong sense of community.

Cultural demographics

Membership of cultural groupings can affect media participation. Minority groups and Indigenous peoples may be affected in two main ways:

1. **Minority cultural groups may see themselves less in the media.** Media portrayals of members of minority cultural groups can be less than the actual percentage composition of the population.
2. **Minority cultural groups may have less access to media participation**, or they may 'experience' technical or language barriers that reduce their participation.

Research shows that people from minority cultural groups watch more closely and identify with media personalities and characters who are members of their own group. For example, US research shows that African-American viewers respond more favourably and have better memory recall when advertisements feature other African-Americans.

Digital media have made it much easier for cultural minorities to make connections with each other in Australia. This has allowed minority cultural groups to communicate their interests and to build identities. For example, specialised media platforms may provide spaces to exhibit media products in other languages.

Media convergence can affect the way cultural minority groups find themselves in relation to the media, as traditional media may under-represent them. However, they could find that an alternative media platform may be created that allows them more engagement.

Conflicting points of view or ideological positions can be framed between mainstream media platforms and platforms aimed at cultural minorities. The group member has to negotiate different linguistic and ideological zones. In many ways, there is an increased media 'mobility'. This can require a higher level of media or technical literacy. There may also be increased intergenerational conflict for group members. Older generations may be more connected to the traditional ways of doing things.

According to Professor Myria Georgiou of the London School of Economics, cultural minority groups use traditional and new media in three main ways:

1. **Media for seeing the self.** Cultural groups use media platforms in ways that enable them to see themselves represented. For example, they may view Indigenous-produced narratives and more strongly identify with the protagonist.
2. **Media to link with their communities.** Maintaining links with the home community or the Indigenous community is an important aspect of cultural minority participation in media.
3. **Media to link multicultural to the mainstream.** Since many members of cultural minorities negotiate a variety of media platforms, they may feel they belong to both the minority culture and the mainstream culture. This is a complex citizenship.

3.2 ACTIVITIES

1   In small groups, discuss your own experience of the effect of audience contexts on your interactions with the moving-image media. **Analyse** a situation where context has affected the media interactions of group members. **Consider** whether there is a pattern in the behaviour of people in that context or similar ones. What similarities and differences can you see with the contexts described in the section on group contexts?

2   Survey the class to find out, in a typical day, how much time they have available to consume moving-image media. Also find out the times most people are available to consume media. **Analyse** the information to determine the typical times and duration of availability for an average student. **Interpret** the findings to **make judgements** about the availability for media consumption that the typical teenager has. **Evaluate** the likely impacts this would have on the potential media consumption patterns of the average student. **Draw conclusions** about how media companies could adapt their products accordingly. Present the information to the class.

3   Advertising companies group audiences according to their demography. Watch some television commercials and assign one of the categories of demography used in either the generations, social class or values segments of demography. **Describe** the factors that influenced your decision and **identify** some of the features that allowed you to make that decision. **Analyse** the features you identified and **interpret** them in relation to their appeal to the target audience.

4   List television shows and films that you think would appeal to the generations from Baby Boomer onwards. **Describe** why you think the texts appeal to the audience.
    Design a proposal for a new television show or film to appeal to one of the generations (not your own). Pitch your idea to the class.

5   Select a minority cultural group that you know or are interested in. Use your knowledge and information from research to respond to the areas of activity in the following table.

DESCRIBE	ANALYSE	EVALUATE
Describe the range of media platforms available to members of this group, choosing one that fulfils each of the three ways media are used by cultural minority groups.	**Analyse** the range of programming available on the platform that is special to the cultural group. **Examine** program options across a week. **Consider** how it compares to a mainstream platform.	**Evaluate** the degree to which participation by the minority cultural group may require greater media literacy. **Draw conclusions** based on enquiry into the range of media platforms available to the group. **Make a judgement** about the significance of any obstacles to participation faced by the group.

AGENCY VERSUS CONTROL – BENEFITS AND LIMITATIONS FOR AUDIENCES

If you can act as a free agent, then you have **agency**. If you are controlled, then you have no freedom of choice. An important area of investigation in the study of the media is the tension between agency and control. Audience agency versus institutional or technological control has been important in media studies since the 1960s and the work of Marshall McLuhan.

- **Audience agency** is the ability of an audience member to make choices in the selection of content, and the meanings they gain from those choices. For a movie-goer, agency might refer to their ability to create their own set of ideas about what the movie means to them. For a digital game player, it might refer to the actions they take in the game.

- **Control** refers to the power that is wielded by media producers and technologies over audiences. This may refer to the narrative control that a movie producer has in determining the path of a story. It could also refer to the control that

Figure 3.6 Schools are the site of tensions between agency and control. Students have agency as they can choose subjects (from a list), and they can decide whether or not to work hard. In other respects, there is a high degree of control. This tension is similar to what happens with audiences and the media.

Weblinks
Tricking advertisers with adverts

Subliminal messages in songs

a news organisation has in setting the types of news stories that will appear in the news bulletin. Technological control is exerted over audiences by the design of the technology. There are certain things that it can and cannot do (see Chapter 4).

Tension between agency and control exists between the audience and the media. Audiences have much greater agency today than previously. Movies, television, radio and newspapers in the 20th century did not offer much opportunity for audience agency. The audience's own 'meaning making' was the extent of the agency available to them. People could make their own meanings from what was screened in front of them, but they were not able to alter the progression or nature of the story.

Nowadays, there is a different tension between agency and control. It is played out in complicated ways as audiences and institutions battle for agency and control.

- **Agency – illusion or reality?** Many media platforms offer audiences a degree of agency, allowing them to make selections and choices. However, at times this is illusory. The producers are directing audiences by tightly controlling the choices they can make – often for profit.
- **Hackers subverting control.** Some media users are highly skilled at manipulating the media systems to give themselves more freedom of agency. Mods (modifications) in digital games are an example of this.

- **Different agency.** Some audiences have more agency than others. For example, older audiences may be less proficient with the technology required to exert agency in some digital games. Equally, younger audiences may not have the cultural knowledge and experience to exert agency over multiple subtle meanings within a movie. The socioeconomic and cultural background of an audience can affect its agency. For example, there could be a language barrier or there may be a lack of access to a medium due to the cost.

Algorithms, audience agency and control

The pervasiveness of algorithms across society has led to the emergence of pessimistic or deterministic views of technology that play into a kind of 'powerlessness' in the face of algorithms and what they control. Questions have arisen such as whether society has become subject to 'machinic enslavement' or if algorithms control or exploit society. In machinic enslavement, users function as components within machine-like systems, such as media networks and digital platforms. A typical question in this context might be, 'Do I have any control over what I view on social media?'

This might seem overbearing, but there is still a need for collective human action and resistance within algorithmic systems. The problem comes from perspectives that reduce human interaction and participation to data points or algorithmic inputs There is an interplay between exploitation and enjoyment in social media, suggesting that users are not simply dominated but are active participants in systems that exploit and gratify them.

Three ways of reading algorithms

In the context of algorithmic and social media, Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model provides a valuable framework for understanding how human agency and control are produced in media.

1 Dominant readings and algorithms

Dominant readings can be seen as the intended interpretations encoded by platform designers and algorithms. This aligns with the satisfaction that users receive, potentially masking their exploitation. The dominant reading here supports the machinic

enslavement process by encouraging users to integrate into the system seamlessly.

Dominant readings in this context might include:
- lack of critical acceptance of personalised content as relevant and important
- viewing engagement metrics (likes, shares, etc.) as genuine indicators of value
- accepting the platform's user activity as empowering or satisfying.

2 Oppositional readings and algorithms

These readings align with the potential for resistance. They represent ways in which users might assert their agency against machinic enslavement, potentially engaging in the more fundamental process of social subjection.

Oppositional readings in this context might include:
- critically examining the motivations behind algorithmic recommendations

- questioning the value of engagement metrics and resisting their influence
- recognising and resisting addictive design patterns in social media.

3 Negotiated reading and algorithms

Negotiated readings, which accept some aspects of the dominant code while rejecting others, reflect the complex interplay between exploitation and enjoyment identified in social media use. They also demonstrate how users might navigate the tension between machinic enslavement and social subjection.

Negotiated readings in this context might include:
- using social media platforms but with heightened awareness of their exploitative aspects
- engaging with personalised content while maintaining scepticism about its selection process
- enjoying the connective aspects of social media while critiquing its data collection practices.

3.3 ACTIVITIES

1   **Investigate** the variations in the degrees of agency that might exist for members of different age, social or cultural groupings. Respond to the areas of investigation in the table.

DESCRIBE	ANALYSE	EVALUATE
Describe how media audiences can be made up of different age, social and cultural groupings. **Give information** about the three groupings. **Provide examples** of the ways in which the agency of members of these groups could be affected by circumstances.	**Analyse** aspects of media agency that are different for each group, **examining** each and **considering** the advantages and disadvantages faced by each group. **Analyse** the strengths and limitations of each group with agency and control as the criteria.	**Evaluate** relative empowerment of each group in relation to their media use, **drawing conclusions** about the significance of their overall relationship to the media.

2   **Evaluate** the extent to which the terms and conditions (T&Cs) of a selected media platform allow for user agency or institutional control. Systematically examine the T&Cs and **make a judgement** about the extent to which they allow user agency. **Interpret** the wording to **draw conclusions** about relative power.

EMERGING INTERACTIVE MOVING-IMAGE MEDIA

Televisions are becoming smarter and more interactive. Multi-platform programs engage audiences with a variety of screens from television to the computer to the smartphone.

Emerging interactive media products combine these developments into a range of new experiences for audiences:
- **Social television.** Taking advantage of the 'liveness' of television, social television is the combination of social media and television. Viewers share their experience of the show

with each other. Millions of people tune into live television shows and use social media such as X (formerly Twitter) or Facebook to participate in discussions, live voting or so-called second-screen activities.

- **Second screen.** The act of engaging with television using two separate screens at once is called **second-screen television**. Audiences watch a television screen and also hold a second screen, such as a smartphone or tablet. They use the second screen to interact with specialised apps or multi-platform content associated with the main program. Second screen can be thought of as a kind of concentrated multitasking.
- **Extended reality (XR).** This 'umbrella term' is used to refer to media products that use **augmented reality (AR)**, **mixed reality (MR)** or **virtual reality (VR)** technologies. Audiences use digital devices such as smartphones for AR experiences and specific headsets/goggles/glasses, sometimes with additional hand controls, to access MR and VR media. These developing technologies offer a new level of immersion and interactivity for audiences and can be used for multiple functions such as product design, training simulations, gaming and storytelling.

For media organisations, social television and second-screen activities offer the chance to lure viewers to their programs. The algorithms available on social media also allow the media institutions to collect information about audiences.

There are four predominant reasons big media institutions use social media to build interactivity:
1 **Promotional.** Social media interactivity helps to create public awareness of the show. It also helps to create a sense of an event around the program.
2 **Emotional engagement.** Activity on X or Facebook encourages people to be emotionally invested in the show. It encourages conversations among audience members. It allows audiences to become connected to the people on the program.
3 **Practical purposes.** Social media provides a practical means to allow audiences to vote. It is the means by which audiences can connect to the show via the internet.
4 **Communicative.** Social media lets communication happen. It allows audiences to express opinions, even if they are not altering the course of the program.

Interactive entertainment shows

Perhaps the most successful of the emerging interactive media products are those from the entertainment and reality TV genres. Quizzes, music shows and talent quests have always been a magnet for audience discussion. It has proved easy to get audiences to interact with these programs. When they do interact, audience members often feel passionate, and part of a shared national experience as the show leads up to its finale.

Smartphones and social media platforms seem to work together with entertainment television as partners. The two screens in conjunction create a good chance for media companies to improve audience engagement.

Reality TV

Big Brother (2001–14) was one of the most significant milestones in the development of interactive moving-image media. The show was a reality television international franchise with a house on the Gold Coast. Housemates competed with each other to be the last remaining housemate. They were filmed 24 hours a day, and the footage was edited ready for prime-time viewing each evening. Audiences were able to interact through telephone voting, or in later series via phone apps and social media. The audience also became part of the

Donald Iain Smith/Tetra images/Getty Images

Figure 3.7 Holograms are no longer just science fiction, but are now possible through augmented reality technologies. In 2017, tech company 8i released an app called Holo, where users can record video or take photos of themselves interacting with the hologram. To create the holograms, 8i uses an array of cameras to record 'volumetric video' that can be viewed from any angle and inserted in AR or VR situations.

production, and they were regularly seen holding up banners giving their opinions.

Producers of reality television, such as *Married at First Sight* (2015–present), attract audiences by offering fairly structured narratives, known as soft-scripting. The stories are structured by careful editing. Sometimes they offer the chance for audieces to disrupt these stories by surprise voting or live audience protests. Netflix has also investigated the use of interactive polls while watching shows such as *Love is Blind* (2021). Although these polls did not influence the storyline of the series, they aimed to create a sense of community and increase engagement by giving viewers a sense that they were watching with other people.

Talent quests and competition shows

Singing and talent quest shows have also been at the forefront of audience interactivity. *The Voice* (2012–present) and *The Block* (2003–) use audience interactivity as a way of increasing engagement, and therefore profits. Program executives aim to create a sense of a national audience event to create the need to be involved.

Talent quest and competition shows offer the audience some ability to influence the outcome of the show, for example, a small outcome such as a weekly prize, or significant outcomes such as who is voted off the show that week. Low-influence interactivity, such as quizzes, are often offered on talent quest programs. Posts and discussions are also low-influence activities. Some shows offer higher levels of interactivity through voting and polls. These can influence the progress of the judging. Apps can allow audiences to vote and see real-time results. These results are also posted on screen in the shows.

Often, there are postings to YouTube so that fans can watch reruns of performances. Key moments in the show are commonly posted within hours of the live performances.

Interactive comedy shows

The interactive comedy genre is an emerging area of content creation for television. Comedy as a genre lends itself to spontaneity, improvisation and audience participation. Active participation for audiences is, however, difficult in the traditional

format of television, except for a live audience, which was often the primary method of interaction for audiences in comedy series such as *Thank God You're Here* (2006–present) and *Whose Line is it Anyway?* (1998–2007).

By adopting the reality television participation model and wrapping it into the model of their comedy series, Ludo Studios (creators of *Bluey*) created *#7DaysLater* (2013), an interactive comedy series featuring an ensemble cast of comedians and YouTubers. Released via multiple platforms (broadcast and online) with short 10-minute episodes, *#7DaysLater* is entirely reliant on audience participation for its weekly content. Each week, audience members write social media post pitches for a new episode, the comedians choose one, cast a well-known guest star and have seven days to brainstorm, write, film and edit a unique episode of comedy television.

Some of the creators of this series pushed the interactive comedy genre further and explored the limitations of this level of interaction through a series called *Content* (2019) and *Doodles* (2015–17). *Content* is an interactive series vertically filmed and released via TikTok about a girl who gains fame after a car accident. The series allowed fans to communicate directly with the actress and personally affect the plot through their suggestions and comments. *Doodles* is an Emmy winning, multi-platform, interactive, animated comedy series that takes real people's drawings and turns them into hilarious animated micro movies.

While these series did not continue to the present day, the concept of interactive comedy offers unique possibilities and opportunities for content creators when pitching and creating multi-platform content that relies on active audience input and engagement.

Interactive documentaries

Documentaries are a powerful way of engaging with the world. They provide perspectives on the issues facing the world by presenting facts about a subject using real events, people and places. They stimulate audiences to take action, and force political change. Pioneer documentary-maker John Grierson defined a documentary as the creative treatment of actuality (or reality).

Linear or traditional documentaries are now joined by **interactive documentaries**, thanks to

Refugee Republic http://refugeerepublic.submarinechannel.com

Figure 3.8 *Sorella's Story* (directed by Brisbane filmmaker Peter Hegedus) is an immersive hybrid documentary that blends archival material, dramatic reenactment and VR to bring to life the haunting final moments of a young girl during the 1941 Latvian Holocaust.

Weblink
Refugee Republic

changes in technology. Interactive documentaries are not simply a new style of linear documentary, but are now considered to be an entirely new art form.

An interactive documentary is one that is usually delivered over the internet and uses interactivity as central to the audience experience. If it was ever shown on traditional television, it would lose many of its basic elements. Interactive documentaries examine the real world by using digital interactive technologies.

According to film academic Sandra Gaudenzi, there are three main approaches to interactive documentaries: user-controlled, immersive and co-created.

1 **User-controlled.** Interactive documentaries where the user can control what elements they see, and how the story progresses, are the most common type. An example is *Journey to the End of Coal* (2008), which tells the stories of Chinese coal miners sacrificing themselves to their nation's economic progress. The user is placed in the role of an investigator. The documentary operates along the same principles as **choose-your-own-adventure stories**.

2 **Immersive.** Some interactive documentaries use AR or VR to place the user into the world of the story. **Immersion** shifts the experience of the user into something much deeper. For example, immersion into the world of a refugee in a camp can be a heightened emotional experience. The audience member moves from being an eyewitness via television to being an actual participant via VR.

3 **Co-created.** Users can contribute to some interactive documentaries, uploading video or images from their mobile phones. Ridley Scott and Kevin MacDonald used YouTubers to contribute video content for the movie *Life in a Day* (2010). Other co-created products ask participants to submit shots to a video that is already live on the website. An example of this is *The Johnny Cash Project* (2007–present). Others ask users to contribute to a questionnaire or provide information for a database. For example, the French interactive documentary *Génération Quoi?* ('What?') built into the interactive program a 143-question survey that almost 230 000 users filled in as they participated in the documentary. As a result, the portrait of a generation that the documentary presented was changing all the time as more data was added. An Australian example of a co-created documentary is *Big Stories Small Towns* (2010), which showcases filmmaker and community-made footage.

Features of interactive documentaries

Interactive documentaries have existed in experimental form since the 1980s. However, the growth of social media and the opportunities for participation as a result of the internet have led to a huge growth in the genre.

Interactive documentaries have two main features:

1 **Modular.** A traditional linear documentary is like one single unit. An interactive documentary is composed of separate linked parts that allow users to choose their own path. These can be thought of as separate modules of files. Each file of images and videos is independent, and capable of being reached from other files by hypertext links. The user makes their own pathway through the information.

2 **Variable.** Once a traditional documentary has been edited, it cannot be changed – its form is fixed. An interactive documentary can change and evolve as users change the order of the files or add material of their own. Each experience of it can be different, depending on how the algorithms match the data.
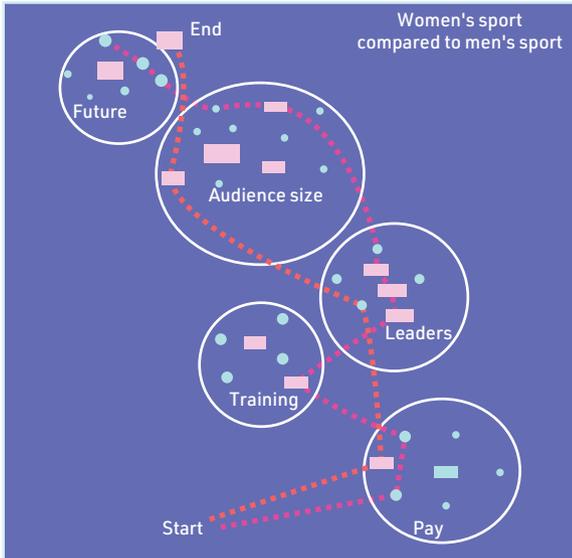
Figure 3.9 A 'map' of an interactive documentary about women's sport and the aim of future parity with men's sport. Files on similar topic areas are grouped together and allocated the same colour. For instance, all video interviews and commentary on the differences between what male and female sports stars can earn are grouped in one area. Large files are represented by squares, smaller ones by dots. Users can choose to just view one file, several files or they can elect to view none of them, moving on to one of the other topic areas. The dotted lines represent the pathways of two different users.

Benefits and limitations for audiences

An obvious audience benefit of interactive documentaries is that users can follow their own interests and choose to investigate events as they see fit. In many ways, this puts them in the shoes of the original filmmaker or editor. They can make their own construction of the meaning.

For example, one interactive documentary showed a user interface that looked like two parallel bumpy or wavy lines – like cardiograms. One line represented the emotions and reactions to events felt by families, and the other represented the cold hard facts of the officials and military and the official version of the story. Moving a cursor from one line to the other allowed the user to contrast the two, accessing both feelings and facts. Audiences had the option of following an emotional or factual pathway, or to switch between the lines. As a result, they may feel that their involvement is much more immersive and experiential.

However, this has limits. Audience members can only construct meaning out of the footage the filmmaker has provided. This is also the case with traditional documentaries, but the capacity to make

your own sense of the information is present in interactive documentaries to a much greater degree. It transforms the audience into 'doers' and 'makers' rather than 'receivers'. Potentially, this makes the audience more powerful.

Documentary filmmakers often say their best material ended up on the cutting-room floor, particularly considering that the shooting ratio of a documentary can be quite high. It can rise to 50:1 or more (which means the filmmaker may shoot 50 hours of footage from which the editor produces a 1-hour documentary). A major benefit of an interactive documentary format is that this vast amount of information and footage can be included; however, it still must be organised and coherent.

Traditional documentaries are more likely to offer viewers the chance to interrogate evidence and be guided towards reaching a point of view. Linear narratives allow the filmmaker to express a point of view, argues Arnau Gifreu, an interactive documentary specialist. In contrast, interactive documentaries are better at creating a debate, Gifreu says. The audience is more likely to feel that there are multiple perspectives. However, any sense of 'truth' may be considerably watered down.

Interactive films

An **interactive film** is a participatory experience that follows the 'choose your own adventure' style of storytelling where a viewer can make decisions that affect the outcome of the story. These sorts of experiences have existed since the 1980s with the development of LaserDisc technologies (precursor to DVDs and Blu-ray discs). However, these interactive movies were usually considered to be part of the gaming world instead of a cinematic experience.

The 1992 interactive film *I'm Your Man* required participating cinemas to spend thousands of dollars retrofitting their chairs with joysticks and buttons so that audience members could make decisions along the way. The 20-minute experience was met with mixed reviews – teenagers loved it, but not so much the adults in the audience. One major criticism was that audience members would run around the theatre and press the buttons of empty seats, thus skewing the 'vote'. Overall, the 'interfilm' experience was considered gimmicky. Some of the interactive films of this era were later released on DVDs that could be 'played' at home, but mostly this concept was merged into video game experiences.
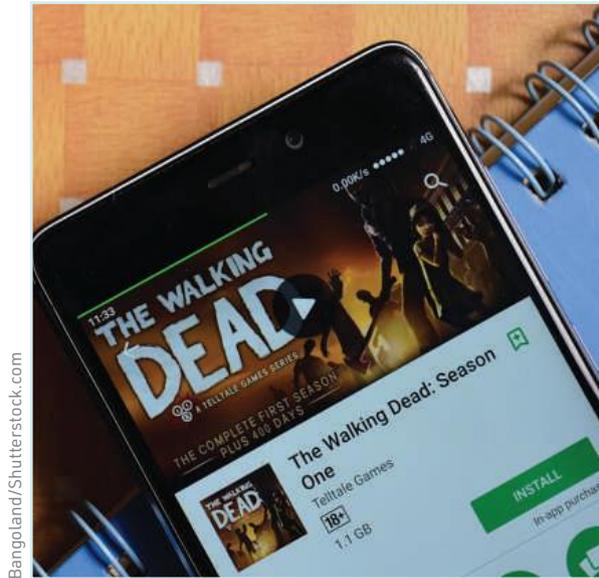
Figure 3.10 The video game company Telltale Games has successfully used the interactive film features to create narrative experiences based on established media products such as *The Walking Dead* (2010–present) and *Guardians of the Galaxy* (2014).

In the 1990s, interactive films as a group cinematic experience were not as popular as their creators had hoped. Twenty-five years later and the use of smartphones to 'vote' on decisions saw a new wave of cinematic interactive films being produced. In 2016, *The Late Shift* marketed itself as 'the world's first cinematic interactive movie'. During the screening, audiences used a smartphone app to interact with the 180 decision points and collectively decide the fate of the protagonist.

Just like the fading 3D cinema 'wave', the anticipated influx of interactive 'big screen' cinematic experiences hasn't really happened, but there has been an increase in interactive film concepts for the small screen. Interactive films can be found on websites and services such as YouTube, where the 'choice' for the next part of the story is in the form of hyperlinks to another uploaded video. This is an easy way to host an interactive film or series online, but the flow of the experience can sometimes be interrupted by the time it takes for the next video to load, or if the links on the screen don't work and the user needs to click the link for their choice in the description part below the video.

Streaming services such as Netflix host interactive content on their platforms that can be accessed through digital devices, computers or televisions. Netflix's first venture into this style of

storytelling was the interactive film *Bandersnatch* (2018), which is part of the science fiction anthology series *Black Mirror* (2011–present). According to director David Slade, there were over 250 video segments to cover all the possible scenes that made up the complex, non-linear branching narrative. Given that there are two options to choose from each time, the mathematics of permutations mean there are millions of possible paths to take, explains Carla Engelbrecht, Netflix's director of product innovation. Audiences participate in these 'choose your own adventure' style productions by using their TV remotes to select choices or their mouse/touch screen on other digital devices.

Augmented reality (AR)

AR is when technology is used to superimpose images or video over a view of the real world. Participants can engage in AR

Figure 3.11 *Choose Love* (2023) is an interactive 'RomCom' film that differs to other Netflix content as it is a singular, original production and not a tie-in to another story world or existing series, such as *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt: Kimmy vs. the Reverend* (2020). Although aiming to be unique content, *Choose Love* has been criticised for relying on romantic cliches, with arts journalist Adrian Horton arguing that it's a gimmick too far, which feels like another poor conclusion of algorithmic content.

experiences via a device (such as a smartphone) with a camera to view the world and a screen to display the augmented world. This means that an AR experience can still be a social one as participants are not 'blocked off' from others as they would be if wearing a VR headset.

Pokémon Go (2016) is an AR game where players 'capture' Pokémon characters in real-life locations (using a phone's GPS technology) before training them up to battle those of other players. According to Guinness World Records, the game was a global phenomenon and in its first month of release, was the top download in 70 countries. Compared with other video game experiences, *Pokémon Go* was visible to the general public and made news headlines as swarms of players converged at particular locations to 'catch them all'.

The Whole Story (2017) is an app that combines AR with history to add virtual statues of notable women alongside existing physical (male) statues. Users can take photos next to these virtual statues and share them on social media to celebrate the achievements of women such as Marie Curie, Nina Simone and Amelia Earhart. The crowd-sourced app and website encourage users around the world to add to the project by creating and uploading their own virtual statues. The creator then 'anchors' the statue to a particular location on the map.

Mixed reality (MR)

MR aims to blend the digital and real together using MR glasses/headsets such as Apple Vision Pro, Meta Quest or Microsoft HoloLens. The use of a headset or glasses, often with accompanying hand controls, means there is a more seamless superimposition of the digital elements onto the 'real world'. With MR, the user isn't restricted by viewing the elements through the additional 'frame' of a phone screen as with AR experiences.

These MR technologies are being integrated into design and engineering applications to allow people to view and/or create in three dimensions. They can also be used for immersive training simulations in the workplace and educational settings. MR games such as the *Peridot* franchise (2022–present) offer an immersive Tamagotchi style experience where the user can interact with a cute digital pet. Other MR experiences such as *First Encounters* (2023) expand on existing styles of action video games, where the user needs to capture all the aliens that have invaded their home (or wherever the player happens to be standing).

Frame Stock Footage/Shutterstock.com

Figure 3.12 MR productions combine the virtual and real worlds through use of a headset or glasses. Recent versions of these devices include the technology to scan and map the surroundings of the user to then overlay digital elements for the MR experience. The effect of this technology for the user is demonstrated here where a rocky canyon is integrated into the MR user's bedroom.

Figure 3.13 A screenshot from the interactive VR documentary *Inside Manus*, created by Hoodlum, Cutting Edge and SBS. Audiences are taken behind the fences to experience first-hand accounts from three detainees from the Manus Island detention centre. The documentary experience features an ink-and-wash style hand-drawn world. There are also recordings from the detainees, so the story is told in their own words and voices.

In the storytelling space, creators are developing stories that can be mapped to the physical layout of an individual's location, such as the AR/MR short film *Arnold* (2017), where a little white dog tries to escape the confines of your room. The story elements a user experiences are influenced by the layout of a person's living room, and Associate Producer of *Arnold*, Kaci Weiniger, believes that MR films are the next big thing.

Virtual reality (VR)

Wearing a headset for a **VR** experience, a person's view of the real world is replaced by a simulated environment that can be photorealistic or computer-generated. Compared with traditional media that presents one view, VR allows a user to move around a scene and engage with multiple perspectives.

A VR user is in the centre of the experience and not just an observer, which raises questions about the ethics of storytelling with VR. For virtual stories that are in the horror genre, for example, or VR experiences about distressing real life events, there are concerns about potentially traumatic impacts on participants due the immersive and experiential nature of the productions. The physical safety of participants is also a factor, and VR apps come with safety warnings about users being aware of their surroundings, and that they may experience visceral, physical side effects from some experiences.

The language of VR storytelling needs to be different from that of traditional media as there is no **fourth wall** between the viewer/participant and the action. The traditional framing choices in television and film don't have quite the same effect on audiences in a VR storytelling setting (see *Film, Television & New Media and MAP, QCE Units 1 & 2*, page 77). For example, in a slapstick-style comedy film, someone falling down is often humorous. However, if a character falls down next to you in a VR experience, you may have a different empathetic response and it is no longer funny.

Despite potential technological and physical hurdles, VR storytelling is becoming more popular, and many long-running film festivals are recognising this trend by including XR categories in their programming. Creators are experimenting with new ways of telling stories and connecting with audiences. Established media products are also responding to the VR trend to maintain audience engagement. For example, the *Wallace and Gromit* (1989–present) franchise by Aarman Studios has produced the VR film *Wallace and Gromit: The Grand Adventure* (2023).

A virtual world where people can spend their work and leisure time is the dream of Philip Rosedale, CEO of High Fidelity. Rosedale's online role-playing game *Second Life* (2006) showed the potential of users interacting in an open digital world. With developments in VR technologies, Rosedale believes the idea behind *Second Life*, of 'living' in an open simulated environment, is finally going to be fully realised.

'A book works through an inner monologue, you read what a character thinks. In a film, you understand a character through his actions. And in VR, I think you understand the story more through how *you* feel in a situation.'

Saschka Unseld, head of Oculus Story Studio

3.4 ACTIVITIES

1 **Identify** a narrative VR experience. **Analyse** whether the viewer/user is positioned as an observer or participant. **Examine** whether the user can interact with the world, and whether the characters in the story seem to 'acknowledge' the user. **Evaluate** how the level of interactivity may affect the experience for the participant.

2 **Evaluate** the user experience of the *Pokémon Go* (2016) AR phenomenon by considering any limitations to participation, and the benefits or disadvantages for players engaging with the game.

3 Choose an example of an XR storytelling or gaming product (AR, MR or VR) and **analyse** the critical and audience reception of the XR product by researching online reviews, ratings and articles. From this research, **draw a conclusion** about whether the XR product was successful.

4 **Design** a pathway plan for an interactive documentary about an aspect of life at your school. Suggest potential video footage to be shown at different node points along the pathway. In your plan, **arrange** some alternative video footage at each point that will allow different choices to be made. **Design** in the pathway a shortcut link at each node point that will take the users to later stages in the documentary.

5 Participate in an interactive documentary or interactive narrative film that is available on YouTube or another available streaming service. **Explore** the range of pathways available and options for **engaging** in opportunities for immersion or co-creation. Respond to the areas of activity in the following table.

DESCRIBE	ANALYSE	EVALUATE
Describe how participants can interact with the production and what sort of choices or features are available to them.	**Analyse** the information or storytelling structures in the interactive production, **examining** each and **considering** the relevance of each to the central theme of the documentary or film.	**Evaluate** the benefits and limitations for audience members of participation in this interactive documentary or film, **drawing conclusions** about the **significance** of the interactivity in comparison with linear, non-interactive productions.

USES AND GRATIFICATIONS THEORY (UG THEORY)

Uses and gratifications theory (UG theory) is about what audiences do *with* media, as opposed to what the media does to audiences. However, the UG approach is an older theory that has come into its own again with the arrival of new media.

Following the disappointments of the effects studies, some researchers in the 1960s and early 1970s (such as Jay Blumler and Elihu Katz) went in a totally different direction. They argued that audiences used the media to satisfy certain basic psychological needs. This shifted the focus from the producer and the text of the media message to the needs of the audience as consumers.

UG and media audiences

UG researchers made the following statements about media audiences:

- **Audiences are active.** Audiences are not passive in accepting the media. They are using media actively and they are using it to achieve certain personal goals.

- **Audiences have choice.** Which media platform and program is used to achieve a particular gratification depends on the audience member.

- **Audiences can get satisfaction anywhere.** The media are in competition with each other and other sources of satisfaction. The audience can use any source of gratification.

- **Audiences have self-awareness.** People understand their own motives when they choose to use the media.

- **Only audiences can judge value.** Even if a program seems to be irrelevant to someone else, an audience member can be watching it for quite worthwhile purposes, such as to de-stress and relax.

Gratification of needs

The UG approach argues that the audience uses the media to gratify (or satisfy) certain psychological needs. Blumler and Katz identified four areas in which the audience can achieve gratification:

1 **Diversion and escape.** People often seek to relax and escape their personal pressures. The media can help them achieve this goal.

2   **Companionship.** The media can enhance personal relationships by giving people something to talk about. For example, laughing about a comedy you and your friends saw on television provides social gratification. Interactive television can be more individualised and less social. However, it can also promote shared viewing. Companion apps of live entertainment shows are often designed to promote group interaction. Interaction with the millions of others watching the show is encouraged.

3   **Personal identity.** Audiences can use the media for reasons of personal identity to build up a sense of who they are, and who they are not. For example, teenagers often use their choice of music to build a sense of identity and exclude other music because it does not fit. People can also use the media to find reflections of their own lives. For example, soap-opera viewers often say the shows help them with their own problems. People can also use the media to reinforce their own beliefs.

4   **Surveillance or information gathering.** Everybody likes to keep an eye on what is going on around them, partly because knowledge about things help people accomplish goals. News, weather reports, advertisements, stock reports and music video shows all keep audiences in touch with changes and opportunities. Interactive online sources allow this desire for information to be more selective and discerning.

    Further categories of media uses have been added by UG theorist Professor Alan Rubin of Kent State University:
    •   passing time
    •   enjoyment
    •   relaxation
    •   excitement.

UG studies

UG theory explains why different people respond to media texts in different ways. They are using the text for different purposes.

A simple UG study might undertake the following steps:

1   **Establish sample group.** A sample group of media users is established with the aim of finding out why they use a particular media text. For instance, the study could focus on players of games such as *World of Warcraft* (2004–present). Often two or three hypotheses are formed that will be tested on the sample group.

Figure 3.14 Japanese teenagers near Harajuku Station in Tokyo. UG theory says the famous mobile phone culture of teenage girls in Japan has developed because the phone meets the need for companionship, diversion and personal identity.

Curious Lens – Stock Photos/Alamy Stock Photo

2   **Qualitative questionnaires and interviews.** The group is asked descriptive questions about their preferences for using the media text.

3   **Quantitative analysis.** Since UG often uses qualitative and quantitative approaches, typical studies also analyse questionnaire and survey data statistically. For example, a study found that 48 per cent of *World of Warcraft* players sought gratification in the excitement of combat while 44 per cent found satisfaction in the teamwork.

Strengths and weaknesses of UG theory

Strengths

The strengths of UG theory include the following:
•   **Active audience.** UG represents a move away from the media having all the power to audiences also having some say in what they will use the media for.
•   **Qualitative approach.** By combining interviews and diaries with statistics, UG represents a middle-ground between the two approaches.

Weaknesses

The weaknesses of uses and gratifications theory include the following:

- **Dehumanising.** UG studies reduce the viewer to a set of needs, and the meanings in the text become only gratification. Humans need more than just food and social interaction. Needs and desires do not explain everything in life.
- **Ignores media power.** UG theorists have also been blamed for ignoring the complexities of the media's influence and giving all power to the audience. They have not explained how needs can be manipulated by advertising agencies. People are shaped by their society, which is in turn shaped by the media and its advertising.
- **Negative uses.** UG seems to assume that audiences are always finding positive uses for media. It ignores the dysfunctional and antisocial uses that some people put the media to.
- **Best of the worst.** Audiences do not have a lot of power over what media products are produced, so their power to pick and choose texts to suit their needs is limited.

UG theory and new media

In the past, audience interaction with moving-image media might have been limited to using the remote control. Today, with the internet, digital games and smart televisions, the media is much more complex. Audiences can interact in a range of ways.

Many studies show that people tend to use new media for many of the same reasons they use traditional media. For instance, the entertainment gratification can be obtained from the cinema, television, digital games or YouTube and Instagram. Competition or challenge as a gratification was available in television quiz shows before it became available in digital games.

Surveying the internet for reviews before buying online purchases or before seeing a movie suggests that people need to seek the opinions of others. Users accessing Google Street View for an understanding of a landmark also shows the need to look around virtually. AR technology seems to suggest a need to experience the world and understand it in more enhanced ways.

Some researchers have isolated more specific uses and gratifications gained from new media. Shyam Sundar and Anthony Limperos say the new media gratifications are based on the affordances (see page 35) of the new media technologies:

- **Platform or modality gratification.** The platform of a technology can let us satisfy different needs. For example, VR may make us feel as if we really are there experiencing something for ourselves. Moving-image media generally make us feel as though we have greater realism because we tend to trust our vision over other senses. A platform, such as a new up-to-date mobile phone, can also make us feel 'cool'.
- **Agency or 'being in control' gratifications.** Users can be in control of the new media experience much more than with traditional media. This can make users feel that they have real individual power or agency to do their own thing. Such feelings can fulfil multiple needs, such as the need to be a leader, to build communities, to be creative or to tailor things to suit the individual.

Table 3.1 Audiences can choose particular media platforms and programs to meet particular needs. The power of choice is with the audience. (An adaptation of a table created by Katz, Gurevitch and Haas.)

AUDIENCE NEED	DESCRIPTION	MEDIA EXAMPLES
Thinking/mental needs	Acquiring information or knowledge	• Television news and documentaries • Instagram news feeds • YouTube 'how to' videos
Attitudinal and feeling needs	Emotional release from media use	• Movies • Television dramas and comedies • YouTube 'prank videos'
Personal self-help	Enhancing self-esteem or confidence	• YouTube videos and tutorials
Social	Making connections with family/friends	• Internet • Social media • Video sharing
Tension release	De-stressing, letting go, diversion and escape	• YouTube • TikTok • Television comedy • Movies

- **Interactivity gratifications.** Interactivity usually means intense engagement with the content. It fulfils a need to be actively doing things, and to influence how something looks or works.
- **Navigability gratifications.** Feeling as though you can move through a space and browse one

thing and then another gives users a sense of **navigability**. This enhances the sense of play in an environment. A sense of play factors into the need to escape or just enjoy pleasure.

3.5 ACTIVITIES

1   **Describe** how two selected media platforms provide you with particular gratifications. **Provide examples** to **illustrate** your explanation. Share your explanation with someone else in the class and compare their explanation with yours.
2   Conduct a mini UG study on the audience interaction with a traditional or new media platform. Provide both a qualitative (interview-based) and quantitative (numbers- or percentage-based) investigation. **Develop** five quantitative questions you can ask survey respondents about their use of media and the gratifications they get from it. These should be 'yes/no' questions, or questions asking about ratings on a scale. **Develop** five qualitative questions that require survey respondents to make a longer written or verbal response (like interview questions). Use a colour-coding system to highlight areas of similarity in the qualitative interview responses and then respond to the areas of activity in the following table.

DESCRIBE	ANALYSE	EVALUATE
Describe the survey information about the purpose and conditions, including sample questions. **Describe** the respondents, including **information** about age ranges, gender, etc.	**Analyse** responses, **examining** each and **considering** any patterns you can see. **Interpret** the gratifications using both quantitative and qualitative responses as constituent parts of the survey. Express quantitative results as percentages.	**Evaluate** the degree to which respondents use particular media for particular uses and gratifications. Interpret the significance of these gratifications in the range of overall reasons people use the media.

FANS AND PARTICIPATION

Sometimes being a **fan** is like being a little crazy, where we dress up, scream for our favourite team, fly interstate to see a favourite band or follow superheroes across every major media platform available.

Hollywood has sometimes turned the camera back onto fans who love movies, music or sports, and has made movies about the fans. Examples include *Fanboys* (2009), *Galaxy Quest* (1999) and *Trek Nation* (2011).

Everyone knows someone who is a fan of something – music, sports, cult-movies, games, television or video programs. Even though fans' activities can be intense, fan behaviours can tell us about audiences and participation. To explain audience activity, academic studies of fans emerged in the 1990s.

The word 'fan' originally came from the word 'fanatic', which describes a person filled with excessive or even irrational enthusiasm. It is often associated with political causes or extreme religious beliefs. It can even have connotations of possession. Nowadays the contracted term 'fan' has come to mean an enthusiast or someone who is highly engaged. It is

a much more playful term than its origination. The term also suggests loyalty to the game, text, character or imaginative world of attachment.

Fandom is the world of the fan community, but it can also mean the state or condition of being a fan. Sometimes the term is used to suggest a collection, community or a subculture of fans.

Media fans

Media fans are highly devoted audience members who often extend their involvement into a network of other areas. For example, they may follow a narrative beyond the first text into a range of other texts on different media platforms. They may co-create additions or 'spoofs' of the text. They may also spend lots of money on merchandise.

Sociologists Nicholas Abercrombie and Brian Longhurst argue that the media fan is different from other media users because of their relatively heavy media use. Fans also tend to be intensely focused on a particular text, character or world. Ordinary consumers may also be heavy media consumers, but they are less discriminating or focused.

'Whilst the fan can be read in the context of fanaticism and zealotry, many of the behaviours associated with media fandom are comparable to loyalty, a significant indicator of engagement.'

Dr Emma Beddows, Swinburne University

Fans can be made up of the following categories:

- **Fans versus cultists. Cultists** are followers of cult texts, characters or objects. Cultists as a variety of fan, are more discriminating and more refined than ordinary fans. Cultists are usually more organised than fans and often have specialised support materials such as websites and cult literature. Cultists can often have their own networks, and often meet person-to-person in larger organised gatherings.
- **Anti-fans.** Anti-fans strongly dislike a media text, genre or character. Anti-fans (a term by Cultural Studies Associate Professor Jonathan Gray) might consider the media text to be 'inane, stupid, morally bankrupt and/or aesthetic drivel'. If the fan is positively charged, the anti-fan is negatively charged. Some even form 'hate-sites'. Anti-fans may not interact with the media product very much, but they have constructed a very strong view of what they dislike about it. Their emotional reactions are important in understanding how audiences respond to and interact with media.
- **Fans as active interpreters.** Fans are the best example of active audience members. They make meaning that often extends the media product they interact with. However, even though they are enabled by the media, they are also constrained by it. The restrictions of media technology and media institutions apply to fans as much as to anyone else.

The history of fandom

Beatlemania

Beatlemania is often seen as one of the first examples of the arrival of the phenomenon of the fan. Thousands of fans, often female, gathered in screaming crowds everywhere The Beatles went. The fanaticism of their reactions and the huge number of fans led John Lennon to famously say in 1966, 'We're more popular than Jesus.'

Television was a huge factor in the rise of Beatlemania. Fans could see the band perform. Visuals allowed fans to focus and develop attachments to individual band members. The development of radio transistors allowed the large radio consoles of the 1950s to become small and portable. This was also a factor in Beatlemania. Teenagers took the portable radios into their bedrooms to listen to Top 40 music away from their parents. At that time, televisions were not available to teenagers in their bedrooms as there was usually only one in the house. However, The Beatles would make television appearances on family music and variety shows, and teenagers would rush from their bedrooms to watch.

Science fiction

The emergence of science fiction fandom in the mid-1960s is seen as the beginnings of media program fandom. *Star Trek* (1967) was one of the first examples. The show wasn't especially popular in the ratings, but it had a very strong fan base. The first fan magazine (also called fanzine or zine) was *Spockanalia*, established in 1967.

In the late 1960s, fans of the television show *Star Trek* showed the extent of their power. When the show was threatened with 'the axe' (cancellation) in 1968, fans began a 'Save *Star Trek*' letter-writing campaign. The studios were flooded with thousands of letters, and the show was renewed for another season.

Table 3.2 The range of media users from the most heavily engaged to the most oppositional. This continuum is based on the work of sociologists Nicholas Abercrombie and Brian Longhurst, and Cultural Studies Associate Professor Jonathan Gray. Gray argues that those who hate a media product are just as worthy of study as those who love it. Each behaviour tells us something about the emotional involvement of the audience in media.

	THE CULTIST	THE FAN	THE NON-FAN/ORDINARY USER	THE ANTI-FAN
MEDIA USE	Heavy but specialised	Heavy	Variable but distracted at times	Variable levels
TEXT, CHARACTER OR IMAGINATIVE WORLD	Very discriminating reasons for fandom	Attached but not so discriminating	Flows in and out of relating	Distant from the media product

'The news footage shows police lines straining against crowds of hundreds of young women … the girls' faces are twisted with desperation or, in some cases, shining with what seems to be an inner light …'

Barbara Ehrenreich, Elizabeth Hess and Gloria Jacobs

Figure 3.15 Fans of The Beatles at Festival Hall Brisbane, June 1964. The fan response to The Beatles was unprecedented. The mainstream public and the media were shocked and expressed concern about the behaviour of the young. The extremity of feeling ensured that Beatlemania became an important phenomenon in the history of fandom.

The cultural impact and interest in the show changed America through its fans. The fictional spaceship, Enterprise, was run by a Scot, a Russian, a Japanese, an alien, a white American, and an African-American woman, in charge of communications. Nichelle Nichols, who played the African-American character, wanted to resign from *Star Trek* to act in Broadway theatre. She was stopped by a fan - civil rights activist, Dr Martin Luther King, who said, 'You *cannot* and you *must* not. Don't you realise how important your presence is? This is not a Black role and this is not a female role. You have the first non-stereotypical role on television, male or female.'

When the first *Star Wars* film came out in 1977, it drew in a huge new fanbase and took fans from *Star Trek*. The first of the science fiction movie conventions was also held at this time. The first of the *Doctor Who* fan clubs were established at this time as well. The first Australian *Doctor Who* fan club was established in 1976. The fans set up the club to pressure the ABC to cancel its plan to axe the show.

Weblink
Space.co: How nerds named NASA's space shuttle

Internet era

The arrival of the internet in the 1990s set up media fandom. Discussion groups began, and fans were able to set up databases and fandom archives. The *Forever Knight* (1992–96) fan club set up the first online mailing list in 1992. Many fans worked at university computers to set up databases because most home computers were not connected online at the time.

The late 1990s was the time when fans got organised online. Membership of fan clubs grew dramatically. Fans no longer had to meet at conventions to talk to each other. People could
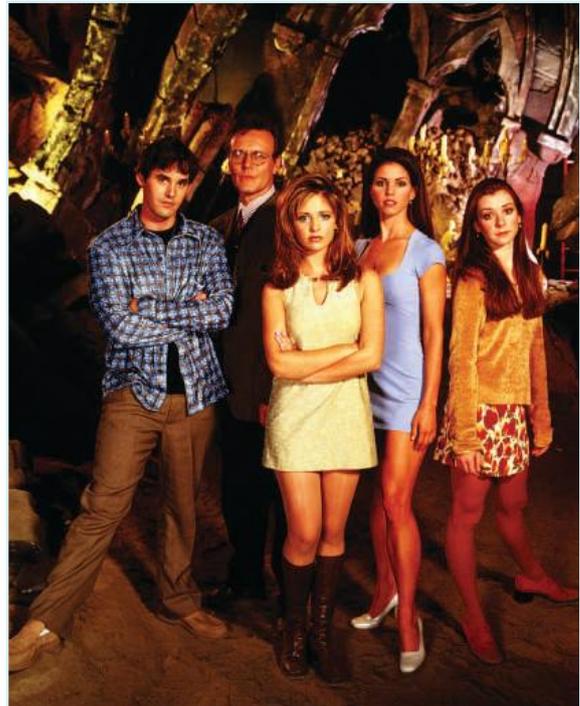
Figure 3.16 *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997–2003), the television series created by Joss Whedon, led to one of the most important new fandoms in the late 1990s. At that time, access to the internet became more widespread. Fans could meet online instead of having to travel long distances to major conventions. Databases and program archives helped fans engage in new ways.

use search engines to find their favourite show and join available mailing lists or investigate the archives. The internet also gave the English-speaking world access to Japanese fandoms around anime. One of the most important fandoms to emerge at this time was around *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997–2003).

In the 2000s, the *Harry Potter* franchise delivered a whole new set of fans. The first movie was *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (2001). *The Lord of the Rings* franchise also established a huge new fanbase. Personalised blogging technology started to replace the mailing lists of the earlier internet. Digital video and editing software began to allow fans to easily create their own tribute videos. YouTube's launch in 2005 gave a space to homage videos.

The social media era

By the 2010s, fans were having a significant impact on social media. One Direction fans put Tumblr on the map, says fandom academic Melanie Kohnen. The Marvel Cinematic Universe also generated participatory fandom as it rolled out films over the decade. Fans became more vocal about fan identities. They found outlets on social media platforms to do so. Fan engagement also became more political. Fans took to social media to protest story developments they did not like. Artists were able to appeal to their fan bases to mobilise support for political causes.

Figure 3.17 Taylor Swift has over 280 million followers on Instagram. Nicknamed Swifties, the fans are known for their high levels of participation. Their activities and their power are widely covered in the mainstream media and have extended into politics.

Fans and engagement

Fans are loyal devotees. This high level of **engagement** makes them useful for study as an entry point into understandings about how all media users engage.

What are fans?

Generally, fans are considered to be:
- **Knowledge experts.** Fans accumulate vast amounts of knowledge about their favourite media texts. The depth of knowledge is what separates them from ordinary viewers. Sometimes their attention to detail is greater than that of the original producers. Fans often pick up small continuity errors, inconsistencies in character and so on. Fans have strong opinions and may think directors of later movies in a series have strayed from the spirit of a franchise. For example, some fans of the *Star Wars* franchise gave a cool reception to *The Last Jedi* (2017) on the basis of disagreements about the back-stories of characters and straying from the ethos of the franchise's narrative universe. Demonstrating this knowledge is part of what makes being a fan enjoyable. Fan knowledge is similar to academic knowledge.
- **Activists.** Sometimes fans become activists and begin campaigns to save their favourite programs or change the nature of them in some way such as the way a certain character is developing, or they want a certain type of story. Fan activism indicates that fans have a high degree of ownership of the text.
- **Co-creators.** Fans have often been the producers of their own media. In earlier times, these took the form of fanzines or newsletters. These days, fans are capable of more sophisticated media productions such as websites, databases and tribute videos. In a sense, a proportion of the early multi-platform work was produced by fans.
- **Socialisers.** Fandom often results in membership of a community of other fans. Online discussion forums and conventions provide ways for fans to meet each other and discuss their interests with like-minded people. Cosplay (costume dress-up) has become an important part of the social aspect of fandom.
- **Commodity consumers.** Substantial investments in merchandise are often made by fans. Fans are a prime target for the commercial interests of the media. Fans invest both time and money in

Iain Masterton/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 3.18 Zombie movie fans at a 'Zombie Walk'. Fandom is often a highly social activity. It can also involve activism, whether to save a popular program, or to raise funds for worthy causes outside of fandom.

their favourite stories. Their identities as fans can often be tied up in the selections of merchandise they buy. Fans with a lot of money will often buy unique and rare collectibles.

- **Multi-platform media users.** Because fans are highly engaged and highly invested, they are more likely to 'migrate' to other platforms in search of extra story experiences. Media companies are keen to promote this loyalty as it provides access to greater profits.

Fans and sustained engagement

With the increased competition for audience (and fan) attention in the modern digital environment, media companies need sustained audience engagement. They look to take existing fans 'on a longer journey' as well as bring in new fans.

The average length of time a committed fan stays involved is nine years, according to research conducted for the Fandom platform. It peaks in the teenage years, declines among 18–24 year olds and is then nostalgically rekindled in 25–34 year olds.

Media organisations sustain or reignite fan engagement in the following ways:
- **Using advertising.** Fans often find out about new developments in their story worlds from friends and family.

- **Using social media campaigns.** A sense of community can be built through social media.
- **Getting reviews published.** These provide motivation for consuming new content.
- **Creating professional content.** Fresh developments, often prepared by other fans, draws audiences in.
- **Creating competitions and challenges.** Involving fans in activities is a favoured way of sustaining engagement. For example, Ludo Studios uses small challenges to engage its *Bluey* fans.

Learning from sports clubs

Sports industries like media industries are at the forefront of sustaining fan engagement. Both learn a lot from each other. For example, American basketball has a strong global fan base. It uses interactive VR broadcasts and AR apps to bring fans into the action. The NBA mobile app provides personalised updates, highlights and live streams. Manchester United adds soccer data analytics, personalised email marketing and social media campaigns.

Figure 3.19 Esports commentator and former FTVNM student Jordan Mays at the Intel Extreme Masters event in Sydney. Online viewership can be in excess of 460 000. 'When it comes to keeping fans engaged in esports, there are a lot of parallels to be drawn to traditional sports. You will usually find broadcasts and fan engagement content are structured very similarly.'

3.6 ACTIVITIES

1 **Describe** the rise of Beatlemania in more detail, including the role of the media in helping to create the phenomenon.
2 **Describe** the background factors behind the rise of the fan movement around *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997–2003). **Identify** some of the social factors that could have contributed to the interest in the program. **Provide information** about how the Buffy fandom was assisted by developments in the media.

3   **Describe** how fans can also be co-creators. **Identify** some examples to **clarify** and **illustrate** the concept of fan co-creation. **Evaluate** the **significance** of these creations for both the fans and the producers of the original media product.

4   **Create** a timeline showing the rise of media fandom beginning in the 1950s and continuing to the present day. **Systematically arrange** each major development in the history of fandom. Illustrate the timeline with images from significant events.

5   Survey a group of people you know who fit into the category of fans of a particular media product. Prepare interview questions to find out if they have any involvement in the main fan activities – as knowledge experts, activists, co-creators, socialisers and consumers. **Evaluate** their use of multi-platform media compared to the original media product.

Respond to the areas of investigation in the following table.

DESCRIBE	ANALYSE	EVALUATE
Describe the survey **information** about the purpose and conditions, including sample questions. **Describe** the respondents, including information about age ranges, gender, etc.	**Analyse** fan involvement in each of the areas of fandom, **considering** results in percentages for each constituent part of the survey. Provide a discussion, **interpreting** their responses and **examining** the level of involvement in each area of fandom.	**Evaluate** results by **drawing conclusions** around the significance of each area of fandom to the group of people who make up your survey respondents.

USER-GENERATED CONTENT (UGC)

User-generated content (UGC) is a form of cultural production within social media. It refers to any form of content created and shared by users on digital platforms rather than by professional content creators or the platforms themselves. This can include text posts, images, videos, comments, reviews, and more.

Key features of UGC

UGC might seem straightforward on the surface, reflecting the social qualities of society. However UGC is like an iceberg, concealing an enormous complexity beneath the surface. Some key features of UGC are as follows:

- **Democratisation of content creation.** UGC has significantly lowered the barriers to cultural production. Anyone with access to a device and internet connection can now create and distribute content globally. This shift challenges traditional gatekeeping mechanisms in media and cultural industries.
- **Prosumption and playbour.** UGC blurs the line between producers and consumers, giving rise to what is often called 'prosumers', where users simultaneously consume and produce content. This phenomenon can be viewed through the lens of another concept called 'playbour' (play + labour). In 'playbour' forms of enjoyment on social media platforms are exploited for profit by platform companies.

- **Cultural capital and attention economy.** In the realm of UGC, cultural capital is often measured in the form of likes, shares and followers. The competition that emerges here creates an 'attention economy', where users compete for visibility and engagement against other users. This can be seen as a form of labour that has no end in sight because users need to sustain their competitive place.
- **Authenticity and commodification.** UGC is often perceived as more authentic and relatable than professional content. However, brands can take over these communications and turn them into advertising or endorsements.
- **Ideological reproduction.** Social media algorithms shape the visibility and spread of UGC. This automated curation can privilege dominant ideologies. On the other hand, UGC can also provide opportunities for resistance and subversion. Users can challenge dominant narratives and engage in cultural activism. UGC has the capacity to create **echo chambers**.
- **Collective intelligence and remix culture.** UGC enables collaborative cultural production using **collective intelligence** and **remix culture**. This challenges traditional notions of authorship and **intellectual property**, creating new forms of cultural expression and ownership.
- **Surveillance capitalism.** The creation and consumption of UGC results in vast amounts of data, which platforms harvest and monetise. This data extraction process transforms otherwise

harmless user experiences and behaviours into issues about privacy and autonomy.

- **Global cultural flows.** UGC enables rapid global circulation of cultural content, potentially accelerating cultural hybridisation. However, it may also lead to cultural homogenisation or the reinforcement of existing power dynamics in global cultural flows.

Examples of UGC impacting trends

UGC has the power to impact online trends, as the difference between audiences, users and content creators begins to blur. There are numerous examples where the original content begins to change and grow with UGC. Two examples are the user-generated mods (modifications) on *Minecraft* and the unique narrative gameplay of Neebs Gaming.

Minecraft

Minecraft gives users freedom within the game. It allows gameplay in one of three modes, focusing on pure creation (Creative mode), survival within the game (Survival mode) or user-created quests (Adventure mode). The application's strongest design as an online game means it is almost entirely reliant on the actions and creativity of its players. Beyond that, *Minecraft* builds itself around player creativity and allows gamers to create 'mods' or modifications, where they can change the tools used by the user and the possibilities of the creator.

Neebs Gaming

With more than 2.25 million subscribers and a total of 1 billion views, Neebs Gaming is a gaming YouTube channel composed of five actors, comedians and voice actors playing various survival and role-playing games. Neebs Gaming focuses on cinematic and role-play gameplay to connect viewers within

Figure 3.20 A user playing in creative mode in Minecraft. Creative mode allows users the freedom to create buildings, objects and create their own effects that directly impact the world. This allows UGC that builds a sense of community.

their community through shared experiences within the constraints of a video game world. It focuses less on the game being played and more on the relationships between the team and their audience.

The channel's success is based on their comedic talent and their ability to build their own unique world within another world as a means of entertainment. Neebs Gaming focuses on its community by streaming the playing of a popular video game and adding their own characters and separate narratives outside the intent of the original video game content.

3.7 ACTIVITIES

1 **Select** a user-generated moving-image media product. **Create** a timeline to show how the product was originally created and how it transformed over time.
2 **Select** a viral social media video that is currently trending. **Describe** the original viral video and **analyse** the audience engagement and how this one video became an online trend.

SPACED PRACTICE

Stimulus: Trailer for *A Minecraft* Movie (2025), directed by Jared Hess, 2 min 30 sec.

Contextual information: This trailer for Jared Hess' 2025 film *A Minecraft* Movie, starring Jack Black and Jason Momoa, was created for release to American audiences in 2024. *A Minecraft* Movie is based on the popular video game *Minecraft* (2011).

Question (Key concept – Audiences): Analyse the techniques the filmmaker used to engage the dedicated audience of the original video game, *Minecraft*. **Evaluate** the effectiveness of the promotion for wider audiences. **Justify** your response with examples from the trailer and the video game.

Weblink
A Minecraft Movie – Official trailer

Resource
Scaffolding

4 Technologies enabling and constraining participation

PLATFORMS AND PARTICIPATION

'You have to put great story first. Where the pathways diverge is you have to understand the best practices for where you are airing that content. A reality segment for television is very different from one for YouTube or Snapchat. Each platform has a sweet spot. The common mistake is failing to understand that each platform has its own best practices.'

Charles Segars, CEO Ovation TV

Resource
Key concept test

Platforms

When media producers start planning a new program, they prepare a plan to deliver it across several **platforms**. This is the best way to ensure increased audience involvement.

A media platform is a means of delivering media content to audiences via online sites or services. It is a means of allowing audiences to engage with categories of media, such as film, games or social media. A media platform can refer to both the mode of delivering media content to audiences, or the space to hold information and content.

Platforms can be technological mediums

Traditional mediums such as film or television can be regarded as platforms in their own right. They are the technological means of delivering content to audiences. Television has two platforms within the medium: subscription television and free-to-air television. However, within that, each channel or service provider may also be regarded as a platform or content deliverer.

Digital games are a newer **medium** that can also be seen as a platform. Within the larger games platform, there are several interrelated platforms or means by which audiences can engage with the content. These include the console platforms, the PC platform and the online platform.

Mobile phones and the internet are also mediums that are often referred to as platforms. The means of delivering content can be seen as the medium itself, just as it is with film or television.

Platforms can be online sites or services

On the internet, there is a complex web of interrelated sites and services referred to as media platforms. These include social-networking sites, discussion forums, video-sharing sites and services such as Netflix.

Evaluating platforms

Originally, a platform meant a raised area of flooring, like a stage, that was a venue for presentations and did not censor the content. However, the nature of the stage shaped how actors could move around and use the space.

This original meaning of platform helps when thinking about media platforms. Much more than a stage, a media platform shapes how media is distributed and how people can use it. A media platform can also restrict the nature of the content more easily than a stage.

José van Dijck, Professor of Media at the University of Amsterdam, says that people can evaluate media platforms using six areas of investigation: ownership, technology, users/usage, content, business models and governance.

1   **Ownership.** The ownership of a platform affects its functioning. Many moving-image media platforms started as non-profit organisations

for enthusiasts. Later, they were taken over by profit-seeking global giants such as Google. The pressure to build profits can affect the experience that is given to users. Algorithms owned by private companies may direct the user experience towards increasing the profits for owners.

2   **Technology.** Platforms are made up of software and hardware that code original content into a media experience. Via an interface, they direct the users into certain behaviours. According to van Dijck, the important aspects of technology in platforms are data/metadata, algorithms, computer protocols, interfaces and defaults.

–   **Data/metadata** includes personal profile details and tags used to locate data.

–   **Algorithms** are the computerised instructions that make the platform work. **Algorithms** provide data on the behaviour of users.

–   **Protocols** are governing rules of computer coding that force users to follow certain pathways that can't easily be avoided.

–   **Interfaces** direct users to operate in certain ways. There can also be a hidden interface behind the visible one. Many studies have shown that a platform's **interface** architecture can cultivate styles of user behaviour. For example, a hidden interface might be collecting information about user behaviour, often without their knowledge.

–   **Defaults and presets** direct users into certain behaviours. Defaults that are hard to change result in most users doing what the platform owner intends them to do.

3   **Users/usage.** Users' sense of control in a platform depends on a range of factors. Users can be constrained by certain features of the platform, such as coding features or ownership strategies. Sometimes there can be tension between users and owners over information control. Technological knowledge can sometimes enable users to turn off defaults or change presets so that they have greater control. Privacy can be a major issue for users.

4   **Content.** Users and owners have a shared interest in presenting good content. However, users want a wide variety of content in all kinds of formats. Millions of people have millions of individual

wants. In contrast, platform owners usually want to standardise things to make delivery easier and quicker. Algorithms work better if content features are standardised.

5   **Business models.** Business models are often a balance between users' trust and the owner's focus on profits. Owners usually monetise the platform through some form of the following:

–   **Advertising.** Customising ads to suit audience profiles has contributed to more profitable advertising online.

–   **Subscriptions.** Audiences can be charged a monthly fee for service access. Some platforms have free services funded by advertising, and a premium subscription service with no advertising – dubbed a 'freemium' business model.

–   **Download fees.** These are the online equivalent of the fee-for-product approach used in cinemas. A download is more like a product.

6   **Governance.** In the early days of the internet (and even the very early days of many other mediums), there were few rules. Today, most platforms have been taken over by large multinational corporations. They have established governing rules for privacy, property rights, acceptable behaviour or identification. Often, the rules are maintained by automated algorithms.
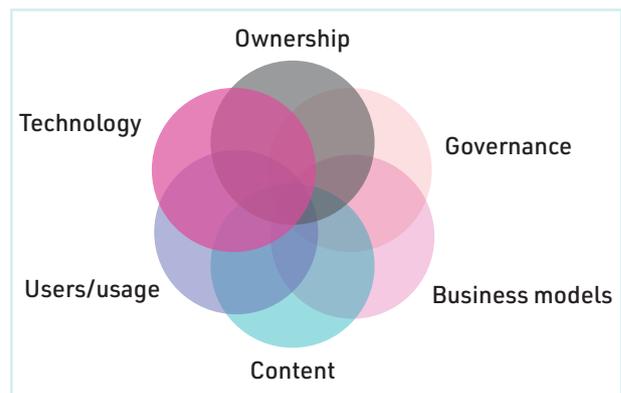

Figure 4.1 Appraising a media platform using six broad areas of investigation. The University of Amsterdam's José van Dijck developed a structure that illustrates how many aspects of a media platform are interrelated. However, only content tends to be the visible area of most platforms. The rest is in the fine print or hidden away in the platform architecture.

Affordances and interactive features

Different media technologies and platforms can do different things and have different capabilities. These capabilities are referred to as **affordances** by media analysts. For instance, paper-based newspapers have the affordance of print and still image, but they do not have the affordance of video.

Affordances are 'action possibilities' that are made available by the nature or design of something. By adding to the verb 'afford', the term was created by US psychologist James Gibson in 1966. Gibson was using 'afford' in the sense of 'supply' or 'provide', rather than the context of having enough money. His new word originally referred to what an environment or landscape provides or furnishes (or affords) for its inhabitants. In 1988, designer Donald Norman applied the concept to human–machine interactions and the design of particular technologies, such as furniture, cars and computers.

When applied to design, 'affordance' means what the nature of the design allows the user to do and how they are enabled or constrained. The design itself 'suggests' how the human can interact with it.

Figure 4.2 Faced with an empty space and just a chair and a ball, would you sit on the ball and throw the chair? Not likely. Designer Donald Norman argues that this is because the designed-in affordances suggest that the most likely action possibility is the one nearly everyone takes.

For example, the design of a spoon appears to naturally allow for the holding of small amounts of liquids. A spoon's long stem allows for holding with human hands. These are its intended affordances or suggested action possibilities. A spoon does not have certain other affordances, such as allowing for the cutting up of a 'steak and three veg' meal. However, it might also have hidden or unintended affordances, such as allowing for the opening of a bottle as a party trick.

When applied to media technology, affordance refers to the ways the audience is most likely to interact with the technology. The affordances of media technologies are the ways in which audiences are enabled or constrained when they use them. For example, radio has the affordance of being audio only. The lack of vision means that audiences can be looking at something else while they are listening to the radio. This enables radio to be used while driving. However, radio also constrains audiences because they cannot see anything. As a result, radio is sometimes called 'the blind medium'.

Considering technology in terms of affordances examines how individuals interact with technology, and how design enables and constrains people. Affordances are an interaction between people's subjective mindsets and the objective features of a technology. This makes the idea of affordances a good compromise between the theories of socially constructed technology and technological determinism (see *Nelson Film, Television & New Media QCE Units 1 & 2*, page 126).

Types of affordances

There are three different types of affordances, according to William Gaver, who further developed the theory.

1 **Perceptible affordances.** These are obvious and suggest a direct action that the user can take. For example, the buttons on a website suggest pushing (clicking). Sliders on mobile phones suggest swiping. Perceptible affordances rely to some extent on previous experience. For example, digital games have affordances that often rely on previous game experience. Digging in *Minecraft* is a perceptible affordance that is built into the game systems.

2 **Hidden affordances.** These are possibilities for action that are there in the medium or platform but aren't immediately obvious. For example,

Jose Martinez/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 4.3 Staff at a design studio use standing desks to improve their posture while working. Fifty years ago, office workers would not have considered they could work standing at their desks or that there were associated benefits. Affordances are also related to our mindsets – we have to be willing to see them. This is especially true with hidden affordances.

some digital games have hidden affordances that allow players to make mods (modifications), or to create cheats or work-arounds. So-called 'Easter Eggs' in games are similar to hidden affordances, revealing a secret level or an insider joke. Hidden affordances can be as simple as drop-down menus. They are not immediately visible but are there for those who are familiar with the protocols.

3   **False affordances.** This is when it looks like something should be able to be done, but it can't. A button that does not work or a broken hyperlink are examples. False affordances in games can be characters who don't have any mechanics.

Traditional and new media affordances

Each medium has different technological capabilities affecting how content is delivered to the audience and how they engage with it.

When considering affordances, American sociologists David Croteau and William Hoynes suggest imagining a live sporting event or a music concert being distributed through different platforms:

- A **radio station** could broadcast the event live. You could hear it, but you could not see it.
- A **newspaper or magazine** covering the event could write about it and have still photographs, but you could not hear anything or watch a moving image. The print coverage would only be available in the next edition, not while the event was happening.
- **Television** could show live action and sound, but there would be no text other than rolling titles and credits.
- **The internet** can do all of the above. You would have the ability to watch the live stream of the event, interact with other fans online and access any related information, such as player statistics or song lyrics. The internet supports all these activities in the one medium.

The development of media technologies had two distinct phases: 'traditional media' and 'new media'. Refer to Table 4.1 for the affordances and limitations of different media technologies.

Traditional media affordances

Media that developed before the internet era can be termed 'traditional media'. Traditional media often has the following affordances, according to Croteau and Hoynes.

- **One-to-many communication.** The media content is sent out from one source (such as a television station) and is received by a large audience.
- **Known senders and unknown receivers.** The sender of the media content is well known (for instance, the Nine Network), but the audience at large is unknown to each other.
- **One-way medium.** Traditional media only offer a one-way communication within the medium. The television cannot provide a means of interacting back with the station. It is true that interaction

Table 4.1 The affordances (capabilities) and limitations of different media technologies of representation. Based on a table prepared by US media academics David Croteau and William Hoynes.

MEDIUM	LIVE?	TEXT?	SOUND?	PICTURE?	VIDEO?	INTERACTIVE?
Print	×	✓	×	✓	×	×
Radio	✓	×	✓	×	×	×
Film*	×	×	✓	✓	✓	×
Television*	✓	×	✓	✓	✓	×
Sound recording	×	×	✓	×	×	×
DVD*	×	×	✓	✓	✓	×
Internet	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

*Film, television and DVDs can show text, but they are not primarily text based. Croteau and Hoynes use 'interactive' to mean that the medium itself allows two-way communication, without having to use another medium to achieve it. Smart televisions are seen as a combination of internet and television.

between the audience and the sender of the content can occur – however, this usually involves another medium, such as the phone, written text or the internet.

- **Producer distinct from consumer.** Traditional media have a clear distinction between the producers of media content and the audience. Producers are usually big media organisations. The audience is usually a vast collection of people.

New media affordances

The arrival of the internet with digital instead of analogue media meant that digital media content could be spread across different devices. These new devices offered a range of new affordances. In contrast to traditional media, new media has a very different set of affordances:

- **Many-to-many communication.** Individuals can communicate with each other as pairs, small groups or large networks.
- **Known senders and receivers.** Often, known senders of media content will be able to track their audience using cookies or other means of reading the 'digital footprint'. Some sites require registration. At other times, the internet-delivered content may allow anonymity for sender and receiver.
- **Interactivity.** New media content often allows for interactivity using the same medium or platform that it is delivered on.
- **Prod-users.** New media allow for people to be both producers and audiences for media. Anyone can participate in the creation of media content.

Technological affordances and changes in social conventions

Public speakers once had to shout to be heard. For example, politicians stood and addressed crowds on old wooden packing crates for carting soap (soap boxes). They developed a certain loud and dramatic style to capture audience attention. Actors on the theatre stage would shout and over-act so that their audiences could hear them in the back rows and see the expression of exaggerated emotions.

The affordances of the studio microphone and the camera changed these behaviours and the ways that audiences interact with the content.

The media technologies produced new forms of appearing in public. The performer could be heard as if they were talking intimately, right next to the ear of the audience member. They could be seen as if in close contact. A newsreader could appear to be looking audience members right in the eye. The bellowing singing style of opera could be replaced with the soft crooning style of modern iTunes songs – only possible with speakers or headphones.

Mobile phone technology has additional affordances that have changed people's behaviour. Personalisation of the handset has allowed audience members to see the phone as part of their individual self. Caller ID means that some of the greeting rituals of landline phones have changed.

The internet has a range of affordances that have changed social behaviour. For example, the anonymity of the internet has meant that people can

talk to each other in different ways than they would if they were in face-to-face contact. This can be both positive and negative. It can encourage online bullying. On the other hand, it can also allow people the security of anonymity and the ability to seek help or counselling without revealing their identity.

Platforms, affordances and interactive features

Each media platform has its own unique characteristics. Each offers the audience a different set of affordances, even when something from one platform is delivered by another. For example, a movie delivered on a video-sharing platform such as YouTube has the affordances of YouTube, not of the cinema.

Video-sharing site affordances within the platform

As delivery platforms, video-sharing sites such as YouTube have some of the affordances of television as a platform. However, they have slightly changed those affordances, and developed new ones as well.

- **User-generated content (UGC).** Platforms such as YouTube allow users to upload video in different file formats.
- **Short-duration video.** Ninety-eight per cent of videos on YouTube and similar platforms are less than 10 minutes in length; ~17 per cent of videos are 3–4 minutes' duration; ~20 per cent of videos are 1 minute or less in duration. TikTok has disclosed that viewers' comment that viewing longer than one minute is 'stressful'.
- **On-demand video.** Television has 'flow' (see Chapter 4, page 52), but video-sharing sites have an audience-driven flow. The audience can click on a set of equivalently accessible alternatives, one after another. The user is responsible for the flow, not the channel or station as with television.
- **Navigation.** The technology employed by sites such as YouTube can create searchability based on metadata such as tags. Tags can direct viewers towards videos when they perform searches.
- **Archived database.** Video-sharing sites are similar to large video libraries.

- **Erratic collages.** The audience member or user can click on one video after another, but the pattern of the flow is often individual and unsystematic. This is unlike television, which is composed of a flow of programming organised according to set schedules.
- **Commenting, tagging and responding.** Comment features allow users to respond to videos and give opinions. They can also interact with each other in groups. Videos can be recommended to friends.
- **Channels and interest groups.** Communities of participation can be drawn together around channels and interest groups.
- **Scalability.** Being scaled means having significant size. Media content with scalability is highly visible to diverse sets of audiences around the world. Much media content on video-sharing platforms has limited scalability. Some media content gains huge scalability, but for the wrong reasons, or for unintended reasons.
- **Replicability.** Computer files can be copied a lot more easily than printed matter or videotape. Online media platforms are often based on replication or copies. These can be shared, changed or re-imagined. YouTube and TikTok contain considerable replicated content.

Film affordances within the platform

As a delivery platform, film requires complete audience attention. People make a conscious decision to go to the movies. Once there, they enter a darkened theatre, which (usually) prevents them from concentrating on anything other than the film. In a darkened cinema, audiences are more prepared to suspend disbelief and be drawn into a story.

The cinema experience is both collective and individual. In the cinema, the audience experiences the film as isolated individuals but also as part of a large and unknown crowd. In this anonymous gathering, there is plenty of scope for mass behaviour, such as laughing or booing, but there is also opportunity for private reflection.

Some critics see the movies as a voyeuristic. The film experience transforms the audience into 'peeping Toms', says Laura Mulvey, UK film theorist

and feminist. The film events take place while the audience, invisible in the dark, observes all the characters' secrets.

Cinema offers the best quality – even today. High-quality sound systems and a large screen reinforce film's power as a primary medium. Television images are made from pixels or electronic dots. In contrast, film has grain. Being created from light, film images more closely resemble what the eye sees in the natural world.

The sheer scale of the cinema screen is one of its affordances. The large-screen format of the cinema affords a greater sense of story taking place in a full-scale and well-developed world.

Movie images are 'over-specified' (filled with visual information). Film allows for a great deal of detail to be placed into the image due to the size of the screen. This has led some critics to refer to cinema as 'over-specified'. Each single shot can contain a huge amount of specific detail.

Cinema is good for narrative. Film is a platform where the narrative self-unfolds. The audience is not required to move around or take any particular action while the story plays out. Film is an excellent platform for storytelling, with an ability to explore plot, character and setting over a typical 90-minute duration.

Digital game affordances within the platform

It could be argued that digital games are the most interactive platform. Unlike the cinema, where the story experience unfolds irrespective of what the audience member does, a game player must take physical and mental action for the experience to occur. The game platform has the following general features:

- **Interactive play.** Digital games involve the player in gameplay with digital representations of objects, characters and environments. The player participates within certain rules, or sometimes against those rules. Games are generally either player versus player, or player versus environment.
- **Interactive story.** Many modern games have well-developed stories with characters, settings and narrative structures. According to media theorist Henry Jenkins, the interactive nature of games means that the compelling moments in a game story become more like 'experiences' for game players.

- **Contestation.** Henry Jenkins argues that contestation (rather than just competitiveness alone) is at the heart of most games. Contestation is goal-oriented struggle or contest against blockages or sometimes enemies.
- **Simulated spaces.** The environment in a game is a space for action. Much of gameplay involves opening up new spaces, whether they be levels or just new places for new experiences.
- **Performance.** Gameplay is like a performance, even if it is a private one. Players are always actively engaged in enacting on-screen actions.
- **Choice sequences.** The famous game designer Sid Meier says that 'games are a series of interesting choices'. The involvement of the player is driven by choices as each sequence is played out.
- **Identity play.** Modern games often allow players to assume different identities. This is especially the case with massively multiplayer online roleplaying games (MMORPGs).
- **Immersive.** Games allow a kind of intellectually absorbed interactivity between the player and the game system. This is often referred to as 'immersion'.
- **Perpetual play.** The time taken to play out the full game story in many digital games can run well above 100 hours. Some games do not have an actual end and are more like long-running hobbies. These can be played over months or even years.

Television affordances within the platform

As a delivery platform, television has the following general features for the user:
- **Liveness.** Television often works best when it is broadcast as a live event. Sports events, breaking news or live presentations are what separate television from film, and to some extent from online video-sharing platforms.
- **A domestic platform.** Television needs to be ordinary because it is a constant presence in everyone's living room. It is a domestic medium that is viewed while people are doing a variety of other things. Television is a regular part of our daily life.
- **Flow of content.** This defines traditional free-to-air television. Television requires a lot of program content because there is a constant stream of programming. This has led many

academics to speak of television as being defined by the idea of 'flow'. Programs are not so important individually (as movies are, for example), but for being part of a series that is itself part of a timeslot that is part of a vast flow of content. The TV series *WandaVision* (2021) manipulates this concept by choosing a different 'format' of television each episode – starting in the 1950s and moving to the 2000s style of sitcom television. To some degree, subscription television platforms have followed the idea of continuous flow by creating a constant flow of algorithm-determined choice.

Timeslots are a feature of traditional television. On free-to-air television, the viewing day is divided into a number of time zones. The most important time zone is peak time or 'prime time'. Prime time is from 7.00 p.m. to 10.00 p.m., and it is during this time that the television audience is largest. Prime time gradually tapers off until most viewers have left at around 10.30 p.m. Specialist programs are shown after 10.00 p.m. Pay television is divided according to channels of content. However, within those

Science & Society Picture Library/Getty Images

Figure 4.4 The first television still image (a face) was transmitted in 1925. Moving images were first transmitted the following year. Today, even with ultra high definition TV, television still compares unfavourably with the sharp images obtained on 4K film (which is higher than 4K TV). This adds to the ordinary and domestic nature of television.

dedicated channels, the broadcast day is still divided into distinct rhythms. This is called dayparting.

Binge-watching is a feature of television as a new media platform. Audiences are streaming news, sport and entertainment programs directly from the internet and watching them at any time. They will often watch a whole series all in one go. Modern audiences have effectively freed themselves from the limits of the timeslot.

Mobile media affordances within the platform

Mobile media include mobile phones, smartphones, laptops and tablets connected to the internet. According to communication specialist Andrew Schrock, mobile media have the following platform affordances:

- **Portability.** You can move around with a mobile device. The physical characteristics of the technology: the size of the device, the battery life and the weight all contribute to the portability affordance. Portability can be considered as being high or low. Smartphones have high portability. Wearable technologies have even higher portability. Laptops have relatively lower portability.
- **Availability.** Mobile media technology means it is possible to be in constant contact 24-7. However, people use this affordance according to their own personal comfort zone. Many people turn their phones off when asleep. Many turn off certain notifications, such as those from Facebook.
- **Locatability.** From about the year 2000, GPS data has been available for mobile media services. The affordance of locatability has been taken up by apps such as Google Maps. Users can see where they are, and the location of businesses and services. In some apps, they can see where friends are. Locatability as an affordance has been taken up much more slowly than the others. However, the 2016 AR game *Pokémon Go* used it to advantage.
- **Multimediality.** Taking photos or videos with your mobile phone is now an everyday activity. Mobile devices are multimedia devices capable of recording images and sound with increasing quality. It is this affordance that has led to the rise of citizen journalism (see Chapter 5, page 69, Citizen Journalism) and a host of other activities.

4.1 ACTIVITIES

1   Choose a medium that hosts moving-image media, such as the internet, film, television or digital games. List all the available platforms within that medium. **Describe** what defines each platform and what separates it from others, giving information and examples to **clarify**.
2   Select three designed objects that are interesting because they are practical and stylish. Have a look at designed physical objects, such as furniture, sections of (or whole) cars or appliances. Respond to the areas of investigation in the following table.

DESCRIBE	ANALYSE	EVALUATE
Describe the designed appearance of the object and its appeal on the basis of style. **Give information** about its general 'looks'.	**Analyse** component design features, **examining** each and **considering** the individual affordances they offer. **Consider** the logic behind the design and its fit to usage. **Examine** the potential for hidden affordances. **Analyse** the **strengths and limitations** of the design using simplicity and ease of use as **criteria**.	**Evaluate** the **significance** and **status** of the design, **drawing conclusions** about its overall worth when compared to other similar objects (e.g. other cars).

4   Select one of the six areas of investigation when appraising platforms suggested by Professor José van Dijck (see page 45, 'Evaluating platforms'). Choose a platform using the investigation area you have selected. Research as much detail as you can about the platform. **Evaluate** the impact your area of investigation has had on the development of the platform, and the audience experience of it. **Draw conclusions** about its significance. Present your findings to the class in a presentation that includes appropriate images.
5   The affordances of media platforms can change over time as technology improves or merges. Refer to the table of affordances prepared by Croteau and Hoynes in 2014 (see page 48, 'Traditional media affordances').
    Evaluate the contents of the table and **make a judgement** as to whether there have been any significant changes in the status of any of the platforms. **Support** your answer with evidence from research (such as recent online product catalogues).
6   Have you watched the same program (such as a movie) on different media platforms? **Describe** your experience and how the experience differs with platform differences. **Evaluate** the significance of any of the media platform affordances in either enabling or constraining your experience.

INTERACTIVITY

Interactivity as a term in media communications arose in the mid-1990s as the internet expanded into popular use. Before that, interactivity was just thought to be something you did face-to-face in conversation with a person. However, the idea of interactivity being some sort of two-way communication dialogue is common to both usages.

Interactivity types and media types

Interaction involves communication through an ongoing exchange of messages. The exchange is like a dialogue. The nature and type of feedback that is received from each participant changes as it goes along. There is some measure of control over the content received, and the order in which it is presented.

There is also a perception aspect to interactivity. Not only does the user's input affect the screen, but the user perceives themselves as having control over what they see. For example, a digital game player perceives that they are changing the outcome of a game, but a television viewer does not think they can alter the progress of the story in any way.

There are three levels of interactivity, says Professor Sally McMillan of the University of Tennessee:

1   **User-to-user interaction.** This type of interactivity allows for people to interact with each other,

using the media platform to allow it to happen. Some forms of digital games and social media are examples of user-to-user dialogue. Users adjust their messages in response to feedback from others. Each participant can be regarded as having equal power (in theory, at least).

2 **User-to-content.** User engagement with media content is a very common type of interactivity in new media. User-to-content interactivity is not as equal as user-to-user. The sender of the original content or document has more power than those who interact with it afterwards.

3 **User-to-system interactivity.** Human interaction with the computer as a machine is especially important in new media. The user and the computer are in continuous communication as they work. Control in the user-to-system level of interactivity can be variable depending on the situation. Either the 'user' or the 'system' does the leading.

Degrees of interactivity and participation

Interactivity can take many forms, and there can be many different degrees of interactivity. Some platforms allow more interactivity than others; some mediums allow considerably more interactivity than others. Some could be considered to be dialogues between equals, whereas some are almost monologues.

The direction of the interaction is an important consideration. Interaction can be mostly one-way, two-way or multi-directional. Another consideration is the degree of control that users or audience members have.

A model with four sectors of interactivity has been devised by Professor Sally McMillan. An adapted version is shown in Figure 4.5. The four sectors are as follows:

- **Sector 1: Content on demand** – shows limited contribution but higher levels of control. Netflix fits into this sector. The audience has control over preferences and can customise the programming.
- **Sector 2: Co-created content** – has active contributors with high levels of control. Interactive fiction programs, interactive documentaries and some video blog sites fit into this sector.
- **Sector 3: Packaged content** – illustrates the traditional mass media model with one powerful sender and multiple non-contributing receivers.
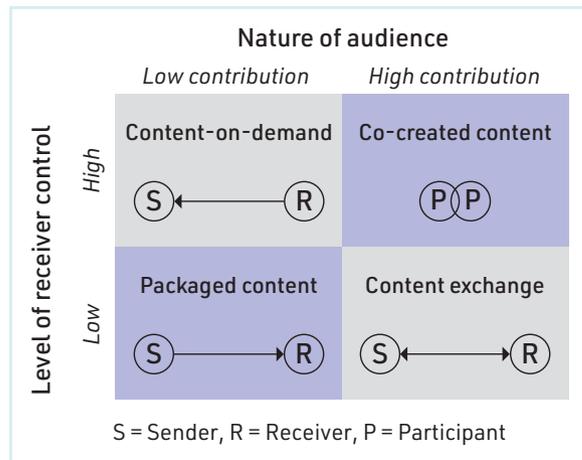
Figure 4.5 A model of interactivity in media, adapted from a model created by McMillan. Packaged content (such as traditional television programs) has the least audience contributions, and audiences have the least control. User-controlled interactive programs or certain console-based digital games have some co-created content and the most contributing audience with the most control.

Traditional television stations fit into this sector.

- **Sector 4: Content exchange** – represents where receivers and senders can create content equally. However, group decision-making tends to mean that individuals have low control. Large multiplayer online games might appear here.

Interactivity is not necessarily distributed equally among the population of users, says internet entrepreneur Ross Mayfield. The vast majority do not interact very much, and some contribute a lot. Mayfield argues that a lot of internet interaction (including moving-image media sites) is low threshold participation, with the user just clicking occasionally. At the other end of the spectrum, users are highly engaged with the available interactivity.

Digital culture theorist Lev Manovich proposes a typology of interactivity that ranges from 'closed' to 'open' forms. An example of this perspective is his concept of 'branching-tree interactivity' or 'menu-based interactivity'.

In this type of interactivity, which Manovich categorises as a 'closed' form:

1 The user reaches a particular object or point in the system.
2 The program presents the user with a set of predefined choices.
3 The user selects from these choices.
4 Based on the user's selection, they advance along a particular branch of the tree-like structure.

This form of interactivity is common in many digital interfaces, such as website navigation menus, choose-your-own-adventure style games or interactive kiosks. The key characteristic is that while users make choices, these choices are limited to predetermined options set by the system's designers, almost to the extent that 'interactive' is ultimately an illusion.

Manovich contrasts this with more 'open' forms of interactivity where elements and structures can be modified or generated in real-time based on user interactions. This approach emphasises understanding the underlying structures of interactive systems, rather than focusing solely on the user's experience or perception of interactivity.

4.2 ACTIVITIES

1   **Describe,** using your own experience and giving personal examples to clarify, how you have used each of the three different levels of interactivity outlined by Sally McMillan (see page 54): user-to-user, user-to-content, user-to-system.
2   Provide a list of television programs that have offered some form of interactivity. **Describe** the options that were available to the audience and provide information about audience use of these interactive features.
3   Redraw Sally McMillan's model of interactivity (Figure 4.5). In each sector, provide an example of a media platform that fits with the characteristics of that sector. Respond to the areas of investigation in the following table.

DESCRIBE	ANALYSE	EVALUATE
Describe the media platform and its functions in brief. Give information about how audiences use the platform.	**Analyse** affordances of the platform, **examining** each and **considering** the capacity for participation. **Consider** the power relationships between the technology and the audience. **Examine** the potential for subversive ways of participating. **Analyse** the strengths and limitations of each platform using interactivity as the criteria.	**Evaluate** the overall worth of the McMillan model as a means of expressing platform interactivity.

4   List all the forms of interaction you can think of for traditional media and then for new media. **Evaluate** the extent to which new media and traditional media can offer an interactive experience for users. **Make a judgement** about whether or not this potential for interactivity is significant.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) AND PARTICIPATION

Artificial intelligence (AI) is no longer a distant or futuristic concept. It plays a pivotal role in shaping the dynamics of media participation today. Whether users are interacting with social media algorithms, engaging with virtual assistants or playing AI-driven video games, AI is present as a tool and a participant in mediated experiences.

Ludification, or the infusion of playful elements into various aspects of culture, is a central feature of how AI operates in media. Critical scholars such as Valerie Frissen and Joost Raessens describe a shift where ludic playfulness is no longer confined to childhood or leisure time, but becomes an integral

part of how we engage with technology and media at all levels of society. This phenomenon is particularly pronounced in digital media, where AI-driven systems foster environments of constant play, exploration and discovery.

Whether users are engaging with recommendation algorithms, participating in AI-driven games or exploring virtual spaces curated by machine learning systems, they are constantly interacting in a ludic environment that promotes experimentation.

AI gives the user an experience imbued with life. It is a facilitator, an active agent, a friend, a confidant, a supervisor or a personal assistant. AI systems establish the conditions of user interaction by the normal

routines found in AI platforms. Curating content, personalising experiences and guiding engagement in the context of real-time production of labour fits neatly into the idea of participation.

AI enables and guides user participation through dynamic interactivity. Much like video games, which require players to make decisions within the framework of the game's rules, AI-driven platforms – such as social media or interactive streaming services – create spaces where users can engage in playful experimentation. The user is engaged in a game of discovery, creating a playful cycle of challenge and reward. The 'rules' are determined by the AI but hidden from view.

User behaviours in AI-mediated spaces

In AI-mediated spaces, user behaviour and participation are shaped by dynamic interactions between human agency and AI systems. These environments offer users the opportunity to engage in personalised, adaptive experiences where AI continuously influences how content is consumed, identities are explored and social interactions unfold.

Immersion and identity play

One of the most profound impacts of AI in media participation is its ability to encourage deep immersion, drawing users into the virtual world. Because of these conditions, users can experiment with different forms of identity and expression. Immersion, in this sense, refers to a psychological state where users feel fully absorbed in a digital environment. AI's real-time adaptability enhances this sense of immersion by responding to user inputs and creating a sense of dynamic interaction.

Virtual avatars and AI-driven identity

In gaming environments, players often experiment with avatars (digital representations of themselves or fictional characters). AI-driven systems enhance this experience by offering personalised feedback, adaptive challenges and narrative choices that evolve based on the user's actions.

In social media, this immersion translates into playful forms of self-expression, where users craft online performances that are shaped by AI algorithms. For example, Instagram's AI suggests hashtags, filters and content that align with the user's past behaviour. These are subtly guided through the platform's feedback loop. This interaction between user and AI creates a continuous loop of experimentation and feedback, where identity is fluid and always changing.

The illusion of choice

AI allows users to make choices such as what content to engage with or what social identity to project. These choices are shaped by underlying algorithms. The personalisation of content creates the illusion of infinite choice, yet the content is selected and presented based on data-driven predictions. This context reflects a form of controlled play, where the AI offers choices but within a limited range. Users think they are making choices, but they are really being pushed toward specific outcomes.

Table 4.2 AI's influence on user identities. AI-driven systems transform media into dynamic, interactive spaces where participation is both guided and open to exploration. While AI offers opportunities for users to engage in novel forms of play, it also shapes and limits these experiences.

AI FUNCTION	IMPACT ON USER
Content recommendation	Guides user engagement. Shapes preferences and behaviours.
Personalisation algorithms	Encourages identity experimentation based on user history.
Interaction feedback loops	Fosters continuous interaction through rewards and novelty.

4.3 ACTIVITIES

1   **Apply** the concept of ludification to a selected example of AI. **Describe** how the AI creates a sense of playfulness in the users. **Analyse** the degree to which the choices the user makes are limited and controlled.
2   **Describe** how AI fosters immersion in digital environments, and **evaluate** the impact this has on human–machine interaction.

TECHNOLOGIES AND CONTEXTS OF PRODUCTION

When the time of production, social organisation, government regulations and all other factors of a technological environment are combined, they create what is called the 'context'. **Context** refers to all the natural, cultural and social aspects of an environment that help shape the final nature of a technology. Any media technology is a part of its context.

Contexts

Technology is like all human-made objects. It is the material embodiment of human interests, needs and relations in manufactured form, according to the 19th-century economist and political theorist Karl Marx. Today, many modern academics hold to the socially constructed view of technology. They argue it doesn't just arrive 'from above'. It is created by the society around it. In a different context, different types of technologies could arrive.

There are four main types of context:

1   **Time.** The period in which a technology is developed will shape it. For instance, television was developed in the 1930s–40s. Its form is suited to family-oriented viewing where people sit down together to watch.
2   **Natural environment.** Geographical and landscape features can play a part in the development of a technology. Vast distances between towns in the US played a part in the focus on the development of the landline telephone.
3   **Cultural context.** This includes language, history, shared beliefs and the economic system. In the US, a free-market capitalist culture with a focus on profits has played a part in the development of subscription-based media platforms.

Figure 4.6 The development of a technology occurs in a social context surrounded by a cultural context. The social context is the group of people in the organisation where the technology is worked on. The cultural context is the surrounding culture; for example, English-speaking US culture of the 1990s.

4   **Social context.** The social context is the surrounding social environment of the organisation in which the technology is developed. For example, the fact that the internet was developed originally in a military and university context played a part in the nature of the technology.

The context helps us understand how a technology developed in a particular way. Many studies of technology look at failed inventions or working inventions that did not go ahead. For example, the winner of the so-called 'videotape format wars' of the mid-1970s and early-1980s was not the best system of recording. The dominance of VHS over Betamax is said to be due only to the longer playing time of VHS suiting

the social need for recording movies. VHS was also the rental videotape of choice for certain entertainment industries.

How context shaped the internet

During the design and development stages of the internet, the design choices were a product of the type of people and organisations involved in the project. If the internet had been developed in a different surrounding culture, by different people, then the internet itself would probably not operate in the way that it does.

The internet is a global system of interconnected computers and computer networks designed for communication. It consists of government, academic, business and domestic networks. The internet uses standardised communications protocols to allow almost any computer anywhere in the world to connect. Other end-user services are hosted on the internet, such as the World Wide Web, email services, Usenet, chat rooms, bulletin boards and RSS. The internet is open to anyone with a connection and a computer.

The social context

Until the early 1990s, the internet developed in a relatively closed community of mostly US computer and defence scientists. The members of this group were united in a common interest: research and knowledge development in the field of computers. They mostly worked in computer labs at universities or for the United States Department of Defense. They often attended conferences together and communicated with each other via early forms of email.

This group of computer science academics and defence specialists had the following characteristics in common, argues Carol Gould of City University New York:

Weblinks
Cuban missile crisis

History of packet switching (TCP/IP) versus circuit switching

- Belief in the free exchange of scientific ideas and knowledge
- Respect for other group members as equals (peer-to-peer communication)
- Belief in equal right of access to information and freedom of information
- Little involvement in commercialisation, business or profit-making because they worked for government departments or universities

The cultural context

The Cold War sparked the development of the internet. The Cold War was from the end of the Second World War in 1945 until the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. The Cold War was the constant state of intense political and military hostilities between the United States and the Soviet Union (Russia) that led to the build-up of nuclear weapons by both countries. Fortunately, it never turned into a 'hot' war directly between the two super-powers.

The history of development

Early tinkerings at US Defense

The beginnings of the internet were in the mid-1950s. Networking was extremely limited. Early computers were large and cumbersome, and required a whole room to store one computer that had less processing power than a smartphone. Computers also needed round-the-clock maintenance to keep going and were very expensive to run.

In these early days of computing, no one had personal computers. As a result, time-sharing was developed. Time-sharing allowed more people to access the machines from separate terminals. Access to computers at any time was made available through limited networks that tapped into other computers in different locations.

Military beginnings

The US military realised that one Soviet missile could have taken out the entire defence communication of the US. Because of this, the US military began setting up a communications network with no one single centre. If one part of the network went down, the others could take over. The idea of the internet was born. To develop the network, the government handed the work over to computer scientists and professors at universities.

Start of the internet

In 1969, a United States Department of Defense computer network called ARPANET was set up.

It allowed defence contractors and universities undertaking military research to tap into defence computer systems. The department allowed research projects restricted to the field of computer science and related to defence.

US Defense lets go

In the 1980s, the Computer Science Research Network was added to the global network. This gave researchers remote access to costly supercomputers housed at large US universities. Each of the universities then added its own networks to the system, further increasing its power. The United States Department of Defense separated its networks from the civilian university networks because of security concerns. Up until this time, commercial interests had been prohibited from the internet.

Business comes in

In the early 1990s, commercial interests gained access to the system, which opened the internet to the general public.

World Wide Web

While the World Wide Web (WWW) was developed by Tim Berners-Lee and the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) in 1991, it was the 1993 creation by Marc Andreessen of the Mosaic internet browser using simple-to-write HTML (hypertext markup language) that spurred the internet's popularity.

The internet now runs on networks operated by major telecommunication, internet, computer and media companies as well as academic networks. No single organisation in any one country has overarching control.

Technology different due to context

The context that existed at the time of the development of the internet changed the way the technology operates. Technology philosopher Robert Gertz says the influence of the context is visible in three main ways:

1 **Accessibility.** Information is openly accessible to anyone. Users can readily view information and they can equally contribute. The idea of a system that treated users as equals was a product of the academic community's involvement. No one's data got more priority than anyone else's. This is called 'net neutrality'. The concept is that the internet is a public utility and that anyone has the same access – from amateur YouTube content creators to multimillion-dollar production studios. Net neutrality means there is one system for all – not a restricted one based on your ability to pay.

2 **Openness.** The computer scientists and academics made sure that the early ARPANET was open to meet the needs of all types of communications and networks. It was open in a technical sense to different kinds of hardware, software and all kinds of information. No hierarchies existed. No piece of information was treated as more important or given greater priority than another piece. Thus, personal emails are given the same priority as important government documents. This is the result of the academic community's desire for open collaboration in scientific development.

3 **Decentralised.** There is no central computer on the internet, and no hierarchical layers of computers. There is also no central regulation of the system. Decentralisation suited the military because it meant no one could sabotage the system by taking out a central computer. Decentralisation also addressed the academic researchers' need for diversity and inclusion.

If other choices had been made in a different social context, the network could be very different. It could be much more commercial, requiring payments more often. Or it could be much more oppressive and intrusive, with centralised organisation and greater power to a small number of authorities. For instance, personal finances, social media postings, petitions, consumer habits and online friendship connections could all be tracked by a central authority. Citizens could be rewarded for compliance. Had other transmission protocols been chosen, it could mean that certain data could be discriminated against or given greater priority. Payment could be extracted. The documents of powerful people could be seen as being of prime importance.

4.4 ACTIVITIES

1   Imagine a different scenario for the development of the internet. Begin with a different social context and a different cultural context. Describe each. Respond to the areas of investigation in the following table.

DESCRIBE	DESIGN	EVALUATE
Describe how an imagined possible internet could have developed and **provide examples** of three different characteristics that could have stemmed from the imagined context. Provide some **additional information** about each of these imaginary characteristics.	**Design** proposals for a science-fiction scenario that illustrates the examples you have described. Use the **specific conventions** of the genre. Pitch your proposal to the class.	**Evaluate** the extent to which the scenario you have suggested could already be in place somewhere today.

2   Research the biography of some of the important figures in the development of the internet, such as Tim Berners-Lee or Marc Andreessen. **Evaluate** their biographies and **make a judgement** about the extent to which their personal life histories may have affected the way in which the internet developed. **Draw conclusions** about the overall significance of these personal details to the global internet as we know it today.

SPACED PRACTICE

Weblink
The Legend of Zelda: Echoes of Wisdom – Overview Trailer – Nintendo Switch

Resource
Scaffolding

Stimulus: Overview gameplay trailer *Legend of Zelda: Echoes of Wisdom* (2024)

Contextual information: *The Legend of Zelda* (1986–present) is a game series with new games released every two to five years. It is created by Japanese designers Shigeru Miyamoto and Takashi Tezuka. *Echoes of Wisdom* has eight dungeons and three side quests. Over time, the game franchise has moved from a restricted and linear gameplay towards a more free-play style, and continues to direct the player to the solution.

Question (Key concept – Technologies): Analyse the affordances of the design using the gameplay in the trailer. Examine the features of the affordances and consider how they might enable and constrain player participation. **Evaluate** the effectiveness of the affordances and the degree to which they channel the player to find the solutions, yet still enable player initiative. **Justify** your response with examples from the trailer.

5 Institutions enabling and constraining participation

INSTITUTIONS AND THE ECONOMIC CONTEXT

The relationship between media institutions and audiences is becoming more complex as technological developments continue to change modes of production and distribution, and give audiences more agency in what media they use and view.

Enabling features of media institutions

In the 20th century, traditional media was owned and created by large media companies. It was expensive to produce and distribute media products. As media making technologies are now more accessible, along with streaming video on the internet, people who were once excluded from the industry due to cost and technology are now able to create and distribute their own productions. There has also been the rise of powerful new media-based companies such as Facebook/Meta, and existing companies such as Amazon have become major players in the media sphere. According to media educator and author Brett Lamb, the contemporary distribution model is a hybrid of top-down distribution from the larger companies and grassroots sharing between individuals and smaller media creators.

Size and wealth

A clear enabling feature for large media organisations is the financial and market power to grow their companies and profits, that is, 'spend money to make money'. Companies with budgets to spend can fund expensive media productions; for example, director James Cameron's

Avatar: The Way of Water (2022) had an estimated production cost of $350 million. Large media institutions can also acquire new companies to diversify their media offerings or invest in technological developments to create new products or services. Recent examples include Disney's purchase of Pixar Animation Studios in 2006, their acquisition of *Marvel* in 2009 and the release of their own streaming service, Disney+, in 2019. Another advantage is that large companies can include a financial buffer in case projects are not profitable. Disney's 2023 film *Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny* was reported at a loss of over $143 million.

In 2019, Disney also acquired the distribution rights (outside of Australia, NZ and China) for *Bluey* (2018), considered one of Australia's greatest cultural exports. The show is accessible via the Disney+ service and has the Disney+ logo when viewed through this service. Disney has not yet been able to buy the commercial/merchandising rights. Confused and frustrated parents on social media want to know why there are no *Bluey* themed rides or toys for sale at Disneyland theme parks. According to the *Australian Financial Review* (AFR), when Ludo tendered the commercial rights for *Bluey* in 2017, the ABC didn't have the 'firepower' to be competitive in the negotiations, with the commercial rights secured by BBC Studios (the commercial arm of Britain's public broadcaster). The ABC has since had to defend itself for missing out on this valuable deal, with managing director, David Anderson, saying 'who knew *Bluey* was going to be a unicorn?'

Multiple distribution options

The options for media distribution and reception have increased with the development of new media platforms and technologies, alongside traditional

Resource
Key concept test

distribution modes such as radio, television and cinema. This creates enabling features for:

- **Small institutions and individuals.** With YouTube and other social media and streaming platforms, small companies and individuals can create media and make it accessible to a wide audience. In the video game space, small indie companies and individual game developers can distribute their games through websites such as Steam. This means that they don't have to rely on their game getting picked up by one of the big companies.
- **Large media institutions.** Traditional distribution modes such as broadcast television and cinematic releases have long been dominated by large media companies. Now these companies can further extend their audience reach by distributing media and engaging with audiences through new media platforms. With institutions distributing productions through free or paid video-on-demand streaming services, for example, audiences are no longer locked into a TV or cinema schedule. Audiences have more freedom to watch what they want, when they want and where they want.

Accessible production technologies

Increased access to media production technologies and online resources to learn techniques has allowed individuals and smaller companies to create high quality productions, even with small budgets. For example, the special effects in the award-winning film *Everything Everywhere All at Once* (2022, MA15+) were created by a small team of self-taught visual effects artists using programs they were familiar with, such as Adobe After Effects. According to producer Adam Gee, filmmakers don't need substantial distribution deals or expensive filmmaking equipment to make amazing films. As the video recording quality of mobile phones has improved, there has also been a rise in smartphone specific film festivals to acknowledge these productions, as well as designated categories in existing film competitions.

Collaboration across distances

Creative teams are no longer restricted to being in the same city or even the same country. The variety of online video meeting options and ability to share large files digitally means that people can

Figure 5.1 Students on their phones are a common sight around Australia at the start of a school day. The way individuals view and use media has changed drastically in the first quarter of the 21st century, particularly with the availability of internet access through devices such as smartphones. It's now possible to watch a TV show on your phone when using public transport, for example, something that wasn't possible 10 years ago.

Pop-Thailand/Shutterstock.com

work together on media projects, even if they are not in the same physical space. For example, during COVID restrictions, productions such as *Bluey* (2018) were developed while animators worked from home.

Funding availability

Other options available to help fund projects include:

- **Government funding.** Government institutions such as **Screen Australia** and **Screen Queensland** provide funding grants for both emerging and established creatives across a range of media types, from more traditional feature films to social media content and gaming.
- **Tax incentives.** Media companies with a studio based in Australia, or who undertake certain parts of the production here, may be eligible for tax offset/rebate incentives from the state and federal governments.
- **Streaming services funding.** At the end of 2023, Netflix reported that it had spent over $1 billion supporting the creation of Australian productions over the past four years. Companies with streaming services represent a new funding opportunity for Australian filmmakers and game developers, as companies extend their media offerings. Additional revenue can be made when these companies license existing Australian productions to add to their content libraries.

- **Crowdfunding.** Online websites such as Kickstarter.com give productions the opportunity to seek funding from the general public by sharing their project ideas and asking the 'crowd' to contribute financially. The Academy Award-winning animated short film *Hair Love* (2019) was crowdfunded by individuals, and also received a funding contribution through this avenue from the hair product company Dove.
- **Audience-owned companies.** While still in its infancy, company Legion M is currently marketing itself as the first 'fan-owned' media company. According to Legion M's website, 'an entertainment company owned by fans is more than just a fun idea – it's the foundation of a business model with the potential to change Hollywood forever.'

Institution and audience communication

The participatory nature of contemporary media means that there can be responsive two-way communication between audiences and the institutions who create and/or distribute media. On the video game website Steam, for example, players can add reviews and comments about their experiences. Game developers can respond to comments and consider the feedback when developing updates and patches.

Social media promotion

Institutions can use social media platforms for the purposes of marketing and audience engagement. Writer/director Mark Murphy believes these platforms are 'indispensable tools in the arsenal of film promotion' as they can share different types of content from movie trailers and behind the scenes footage, to engaging with audiences through 'live' streamed events. People can comment on and share posts, helping to further promote media products and generate 'buzz'.

Constraining features of media institutions

British media tycoon Lord Thomson is reported to have said that owning a television station is a licence to print money. For economic and other reasons, the media institutions are close to the centres of power in society. They are closer to the 'big end of town' than they are to their audiences.

Media organisations tend to have common characteristics because they all operate in the same business environment.

Profit takers

Most media organisations are private businesses. They are corporations with shareholders, and their prime concern is to make a profit for those shareholders. Today, production costs of many blockbuster films are over US$200 million. For example, *Black Panther* (2018) cost more than US$200 million and within a few months had returned more than $1 billion. Although returns are not guaranteed, they can be spectacular when they happen. Box office revenue and DVD sales for *Avatar* (2009) was more than US$3 billion.
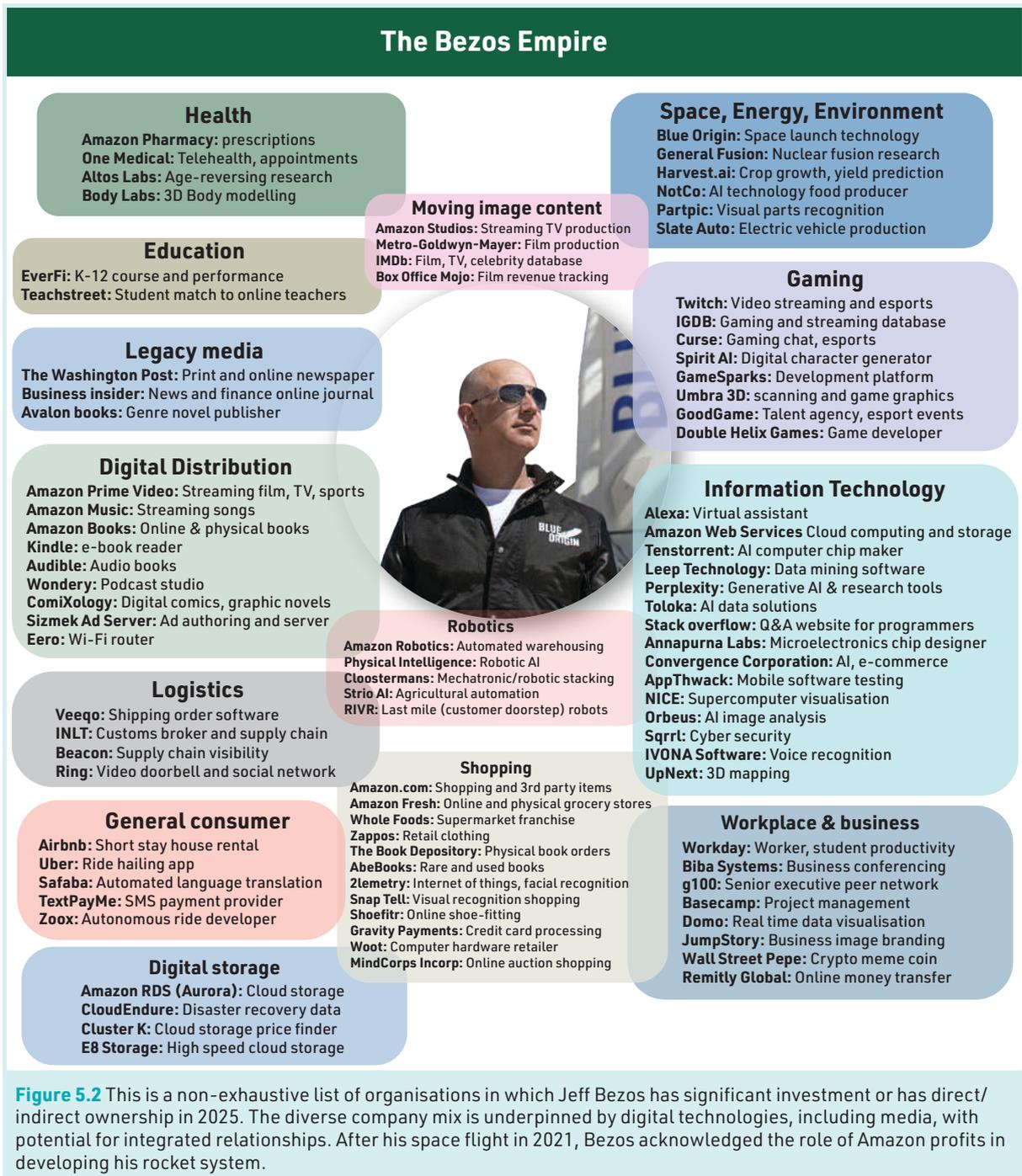
Supporting the powerful

The owners of media organisations can strongly influence those organisations. There are many examples of news editors being forced to resign because they did not support the owner's political viewpoint. A survey of journalists showed that more than 70 per cent believed owners used the media to push their own political views.

The owners of big businesses are members of the world's ruling class. While this ruling class makes up approximately 1 per cent of the population, they control nearly two-thirds of all global wealth created since 2020, according to an Oxfam International report in 2023. They also emit as much carbon as two-thirds of the planet's poorest, says the same report. As members of that group, big media owners tend to represent reality from the viewpoint of 'the bosses'.

However, the perspective of owners works in a complex relationship with the audience. Media organisations cannot afford to alienate most of their audience. When owner of the *Washington Post*, Amazon's Jeff Bezos, allowed his editorial team to break with tradition and make no recommendations for President in the 2024 US elections, 10 per cent of the audience immediately cancelled their subscriptions in protest.

To make profits, organisations sometimes tolerate material that does not directly support the

The Bezos Empire

Health
Amazon Pharmacy: prescriptions
One Medical: Telehealth, appointments
Altos Labs: Age-reversing research
Body Labs: 3D Body modelling

Space, Energy, Environment
Blue Origin: Space launch technology
General Fusion: Nuclear fusion research
Harvest.ai: Crop growth, yield prediction
NotCo: AI technology food producer
Partpic: Visual parts recognition
Slate Auto: Electric vehicle production

Moving image content
Amazon Studios: Streaming TV production
Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer: Film production
IMDb: Film, TV, celebrity database
Box Office Mojo: Film revenue tracking

Education
EverFi: K-12 course and performance
Teachstreet: Student match to online teachers

Gaming
Twitch: Video streaming and esports
IGDB: Gaming and streaming database
Curse: Gaming chat, esports
Spirit AI: Digital character generator
GameSparks: Development platform
Umbra 3D: scanning and game graphics
GoodGame: Talent agency, esport events
Double Helix Games: Game developer

Legacy media
The Washington Post: Print and online newspaper
Business insider: News and finance online journal
Avalon books: Genre novel publisher

Digital Distribution
Amazon Prime Video: Streaming film, TV, sports
Amazon Music: Streaming songs
Amazon Books: Online & physical books
Kindle: e-book reader
Audible: Audio books
Wondery: Podcast studio
ComiXology: Digital comics, graphic novels
Sizmek Ad Server: Ad authoring and server
Eero: Wi-Fi router

Information Technology
Alexa: Virtual assistant
Amazon Web Services Cloud computing and storage
Tenstorrent: AI computer chip maker
Leep Technology: Data mining software
Perplexity: Generative AI & research tools
Toloka: AI data solutions
Stack overflow: Q&A website for programmers
Annapurna Labs: Microelectronics chip designer
Convergence Corporation: AI, e-commerce
AppThwack: Mobile software testing
NICE: Supercomputer visualisation
Orbeus: AI image analysis
Sqrrl: Cyber security
IVONA Software: Voice recognition
UpNext: 3D mapping

Robotics
Amazon Robotics: Automated warehousing
Physical Intelligence: Robotic AI
Cloostermans: Mechatronic/robotic stacking
Strio AI: Agricultural automation
RIVR: Last mile (customer doorstep) robots

Logistics
Veeqo: Shipping order software
INLT: Customs broker and supply chain
Beacon: Supply chain visibility
Ring: Video doorbell and social network

Shopping
Amazon.com: Shopping and 3rd party items
Amazon Fresh: Online and physical grocery stores
Whole Foods: Supermarket franchise
Zappos: Retail clothing
The Book Depository: Physical book orders
AbeBooks: Rare and used books
2lemetry: Internet of things, facial recognition
Snap Tell: Visual recognition shopping
Shoefitr: Online shoe-fitting
Gravity Payments: Credit card processing
Woot: Computer hardware retailer
MindCorps Incorp: Online auction shopping

General consumer
Airbnb: Short stay house rental
Uber: Ride hailing app
Safaba: Automated language translation
TextPayMe: SMS payment provider
Zoox: Autonomous ride developer

Workplace & business
Workday: Worker, student productivity
Biba Systems: Business conferencing
g100: Senior executive peer network
Basecamp: Project management
Domo: Real time data visualisation
JumpStory: Business image branding
Wall Street Pepe: Crypto meme coin
Remitly Global: Online money transfer

Digital storage
Amazon RDS (Aurora): Cloud storage
CloudEndure: Disaster recovery data
Cluster K: Cloud storage price finder
E8 Storage: High speed cloud storage

Figure 5.2 This is a non-exhaustive list of organisations in which Jeff Bezos has significant investment or has direct/indirect ownership in 2025. The diverse company mix is underpinned by digital technologies, including media, with potential for integrated relationships. After his space flight in 2021, Bezos acknowledged the role of Amazon profits in developing his rocket system.

interests of the owners of big business. Occasionally, for example, through television programs such as *The Simpsons*, a less elitist view of the world can be presented. However, analysis of news programs has shown much clearer support for the big business establishment than appears in entertainment programs.

Tending towards monopoly

The media industry is a competitive jungle where larger businesses gobble up smaller ones until only one (a monopoly) or, more commonly, a few (an oligopoly) are left. In either case, the result is an unhealthy concentration of ownership.

- **Monopoly**. In a media monopoly, a single firm dominates the market or even operates as the sole provider. Large western media markets have not yet reached the stage of monopoly.

- **Oligopoly**. In an oligopoly, four or five firms operate like card sharps in a poker game. Each player knows what the others are up to but does not have perfect knowledge. Others are excluded from the game. In Europe, the UK, Australia and the US, the major media markets seem to have settled down to four big players per market. Some of these, such as Rupert Murdoch, are household names in a number of countries.

Diversification

Diversification is a process of enlarging a company by taking over or merging with other companies. For example, the NBC network in the US is owned by General Electric, which makes conventional and nuclear weapons on a defence contract. In Australia, private equity investors in media companies have extensive other investments as well as their media interests. Diversification increases profits and long-term security. If revenue is down in one part of the company, other parts can support it.

Sideways expansion is called **horizontal integration**. The entertainment media already sell their products in the leisure industry. For example, to horizontally integrate, a movie company may spread its activities into virtual reality technology or holiday resorts. It is still within the leisure industry, but has spread to other, parallel activities. For example, Sony Entertainment produces films, television programs and digital games, spreading horizontally across the entertainment platforms.

Expansion up or down is called **vertical integration**. It is made possible because the production process is divided into stages. For instance, a newspaper begins as a tree, and then goes through multiple stages of production and distribution as a newspaper until it finally ends up as stuffing for a padded post bag. In one example of vertical integration, the Japanese
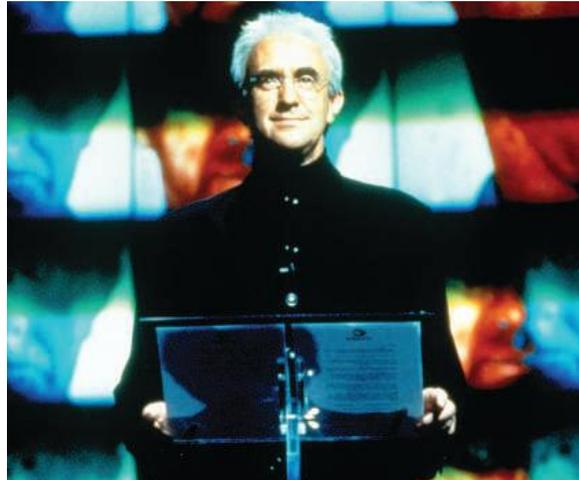
Figure 5.3 Most James Bond spy film villains are drawn from cold war threats of world domination. The 1997 *Tomorrow Never Dies* plot featured a world-dominating media mogul, manipulating public opinion and politics. Elliot Carver's legacy media empire from 1997 was strikingly similar to Rupert Murdoch's global News Corp power, which he built from one newspaper, purchased in Adelaide.

television manufacturer Sony purchased the US movie company Columbia in the early 1990s. Sony now controls the production and distribution of some of Hollywood's most famous movies and television programs. Sony also makes televisions and video cameras. In this way, it controls media production from top to bottom. In Australia, Rupert Murdoch controls 70 per cent of the nation's newspapers and owns all sources of mainstream newsprint.

When media companies buy shares in companies making other products, there is an increased danger of a conflict of interest. For example, a newspaper company is unlikely to run a story on problems with airline safety if the company also owns the airline.

Selling audiences as products

Media products are not sold direct to their consumers. Instead, the consumers are sold to other producers. For example, television advertisers buy the audience for a prime-time television program for 30 seconds so they can show their advertisement. The cost of each 30-second timeslot depends on the show's ratings.

Figure 5.4 The HBO series *Succession* (2018–23) focuses on a family-owned global media empire pursuing a monopoly control. The inheritance of the empire on the death of the patriarch predicted the real-life sibling rivalry for the Murdoch dynasty. The owners of News Corp and Fox News are the most powerful media family in history.

The media factories

According to a study of news-gathering procedures, almost 95 per cent of television news stories appeared because they happened at the right time (11.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.) or because the media crew was close enough and there was a camera to record the event. What makes news has as much to do with institutional convenience as newsworthiness. The industrial processes of media organisations are major determinants of the texts.

Division of labour into roles

Henry Ford used assembly-line techniques to build cars. By the time the last Ford Model T was made in 1926, Ford had made half of all cars sold in the US. Much capitalist production continues to follow Ford's mass-production techniques. Each worker performs a single task repetitively on a production line. Labour, including labour in media

organisations, is divided into component stages. For example:

- **Media producers have specialised roles.** Examples of these roles are journalist, subeditor and editor. A consequence of this multiple authorship is that media texts often follow standard routines.
- **Media texts are produced in teams.** No individual is solely responsible for the meanings communicated in a text. The values of the text are therefore more likely to be those values acceptable to the institution as a whole.

Constraining effects of media institutions

Media markets are heavily influenced by the commercial media. Even government broadcasters operate in an environment dominated by their often better-resourced competitors.

Sameness and repetition

Audiences are never guaranteed, no matter how much money is invested. Audiences can be uncooperative and fickle. This makes media programming a risky business – it becomes difficult to gauge what will work. Once a successful product has been discovered, the formula is copied over and over again as every other producer tries to cash in. Because of a desire to guarantee profits in fickle markets, media products can all seem the same.

Neglect of smaller and poorer audiences

The profit motive of the media works consistently to exclude audiences lacking economic power or resources. Unless the media organisation can sell the audience to advertisers, there will be no attempt to cater for that audience. The size of the ignored audience can be in the millions.

5.1 ACTIVITIES

1. Research any media takeovers that have happened in the past five years. **Explain** the details of which organisation made the takeover. Provide information about each media institution and about the takeover offer. **Analyse** any effects on the market after the takeover and identify any changes to media products as a result.
2. Investigate one of the media industries (such as the film industry). **Explain** the range of production agencies (for example, studio or independent), and the stages of production (such as scripting, shooting and editing). **Evaluate** the impact of the practices of the industry, **making judgements** about the effect on the shape of the final product.
3. Identify the principal owners (or owner) of one of the media institutions. Prepare a personal profile of each owner. Research estimates of the percentage of market share each has accumulated. Research details of other investments each has acquired. **Analyse** the findings of your research, providing information about the impact of the owner/institution. **Evaluate** the significance of concentration of ownership in the media, **drawing conclusions** about the impact on society overall.

BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

While digital media have lowered many of the barriers to media access and participation, they have also opened up new barriers. The information society has created new forms of inequality that exist alongside the long-standing forms. There are big gaps between participation levels of different groups.

Importance of media literacy

The new globally networked society requires people to have certain skills and access to technology. One of the most important skills is media literacy.

Media literacy is usually thought to have two parts: (1) the ability to be able to 'read' media by interpreting its meanings and making informed judgements; and (2) the ability to be able to 'write' media by becoming producers and participants in the media.

A lack of media literacy represents a barrier to participation. It can affect millions of people in wealthy western countries and in less-developed countries around the world. According to Henry Jenkins, if someone can just consume media but not produce it, they cannot really be regarded as being media literate. They are reduced to being spectators who are locked out of the empowering potential of contemporary media.

Types of barriers to participation

As well as being an issue of media literacy, barriers to participation include socioeconomic, age and identity group inequalities. They also include power inequalities between individuals and big business.

Socioeconomic, age and identity group barriers

People who function well in the world of digital media tend to enjoy advantages in a range of other areas. These include advantages in the labour market, income earnings potential and better access to a whole range of other services. Certain other groups experience barriers in each of these areas:

- **Socioeconomic barriers.** The term 'socioeconomic' refers to the combination of social factors, such as education and cultural groupings, together with economic factors, such as income and wealth. Socioeconomic disadvantage is closely connected to digital disadvantage and a lack of participation in the potential of new media. This reduced online connection leads to a range of other barriers. For example, employment status and income are connected to the intensity of computer usage. Social networks are also affected.

'In a hunting culture, kids played with bows and arrows. In an information society, they play with information.'

Henry Jenkins, Provost Professor of Communication, Journalism and Cinematic Arts, University of Southern California.

- **Age.** There is considerable variation in the media and digital literacy skills of people of different generations. Generally, it is assumed that younger people have better media literacy skills. However, this is not always the case. Despite the media image of teenagers as being glued to their smartphones, there are wide variations in the media participation skills of young people.
- **Gender.** While the gap in participation according to gender was once quite large, contemporary research is showing that it has narrowed considerably in western countries. However, there are still differences in the types of digital engagement. Females are still underrepresented in the IT production and design areas. Some women still tend to underestimate their skills as well, and this may form a barrier to participation. These differences are larger in countries with larger gender inequalities.
- **Cultural groups.** Multicultural societies are made up of different cultural and social groups that often have different socioeconomic positions in society. Media participation rates are often quite different between cultural groups. For example, ethnic minority groups in the US have lower internet access rates. Yet studies show that American Latinos and African-Americans participate more in content creation than other groups of Americans.
- **Disability.** Media participation for those with disabilities is a case of exclusion and possibility. At times, the hardware and software are not designed with disabled people in mind. Assistive technology can help disabled people. However, this is often an add-on and sometimes it is clumsy. Disabled people argue that the hardware and programs should take them into account from the beginning. People with disabilities tend to lag behind those without disabilities in their use of computers and the internet. According to a 2021 Australian study, 35 per cent of people were high users of digital media, whereas for people with a disability it was only 24 per cent.
- **Regions and countries.** Intense use of technology is associated with highly productive regions and cities, such as Silicon Valley in the US. In Australia, capital cities tend to have more intense use of technology and involvement in communications participation than regional areas. Geographic location can still be a barrier

to participation, despite the internet helping to break down those same barriers of geography. Some analysts speak of a worldwide digital communication divide between wealthy and poor countries. Many of the wealthy countries are in Europe, North Asia and North America. Many of the poorer countries are in the southern hemisphere. Analysts speak of a 'North–South digital divide'.

Institutional and technological barriers

Some barriers to media participation are not related to media companies and specific technologies. Media companies can restrict participation to provide a benefit for themselves. This benefit could be greater profits or to enhance their ownership of certain media products. Technologies themselves can be a barrier to participation in the ways they are designed:

- **Big data barriers.** Cross-platform content and the rise of the user as a participant in media has allowed for data to be collected about users, their tastes and habits. This data is owned by media companies. While the benefits of this data flows to media companies, very little of it is available to users. Users are prevented from greater participation because much of the information is privately owned.
- **Fragmented content.** Media companies often own multiple platforms of delivery. This allows them to generate huge audiences and therefore huge profits. However, this can often be a barrier to users. Content can be fragmented and difficult to track down. For example, if you want to watch a television program and also see what people are saying about it on Reddit, you have to access Reddit separately. You may need to be on two separate device screens. Often there are cumbersome registration and log-in procedures. Navigating across platforms is not as easy as turning a dial.
- **Proprietary platforms.** Platforms themselves provide barriers because they are their own complete systems. These platforms do not have provision for communication with other platforms. For example, Facebook users cannot connect directly to X users. All information and activity are embedded in the privately owned platform, with difficult cross-communication. Platform owners can capture audiences and retain them within their own platform. However, it does not benefit users from seamless movement between platforms.

5.2 ACTIVITIES

1   Survey your class to see how many members are media literate. Ask them if they can both 'read' and 'write' moving-image media – that is, can they interpret the media they see, and can they produce media themselves? **Analyse** the results of the survey to express the final responses as percentages of class members who are media literate and who are not. **Explain** possible reasons why some people have become media producers, and others have not.

2   Consider how the economic, age and identity group barriers to media participation might be overcome.

   Explain some of the measures that individuals, communities or governments could take. Provide additional information about the details of what steps could be taken and give **examples** of how they might work.

3   Select a moving-image media product that has a multi-platform component and provides opportunities for audience participation. **Create** a graphic organiser that shows the multi-platform components, and also shows links to the various platforms that are used to provide audience participation (such as Facebook). **Evaluate** the overall ease of operation for audiences, and **draw conclusions** about the significance of institutional or technological disincentives or barriers to participation.

CITIZEN JOURNALISM

Today, the first person on the scene of a dramatic newsworthy event is probably an ordinary citizen with a smartphone. These people are often 'accidental journalists'.

Average users can play an active role by using new media technologies to collect, report, analyse and distribute news and information.

Social networking sites such as X, Facebook and Reddit allow the footage of news events to be uploaded and shared by ordinary citizens.

Citizen journalism is the participation of ordinary citizens in the process of reporting news. The term encompasses a range of individual and social involvement in media creation, reporting and filtering. Content via citizen journalism can appear in established news sites or in independent blogs and citizen news sites. It has the following features:

- **User reporters.** Typical users or amateur reporters report directly on the news or analyse its content and meaning. They do this through blogs and video blogs, user-generated news sites or submitting their content to mainstream news organisations.
- **Mobile technology.** The convergence of mobile technologies and cameras means an average citizen carrying a smartphone is now more likely to be first on the scene of a news story than a professional crew. Often, the user is involved in

the event. Even when not directly reporting the news, amateurs are able to submit footage for use in news reporting.

- **Social filtering.** This filtering of news allows users to highlight a news story they consider important and upload the story (or a link to the story) to social network news sites. Others can vote for or against display of the story.

Influence of citizen journalism

There are several types of citizen journalism, and it has been developing in new directions since its beginnings in the early 2000s.

Examples of citizen journalism

Photos and videos of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, the 2005 London bombings and Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans have demonstrated the influence ordinary people can have on news reporting, especially now many of us carry a camera wherever we go. These events marked a change in the way media content is gathered and viewed. Because of its 'on the spot' quality, citizen journalism can often be more immediate, passionate and illuminating than professional reporting.

The first amateur footage with a sensational media impact was Dallas resident Abraham Zapruder's 8-mm film record of President Kennedy's assassination in a 1963 motorcade through the city. The significance of this footage proved that anyone

'Journalists once had the exclusive province of taking people to places they'd never been. But now a mother in Baghdad with a videophone can let you see a roadside bombing, or a patron in a nightclub can show you a racist rant by a famous comedian. These blogs and videos bring events to the rest of us in ways that are often more immediate and authentic than traditional media. These new techniques, I believe, will only enhance what we do as journalists and challenge us to do it in even more innovative ways.'

Richard Stengel, managing editor of *Time* magazine

could capture history. Today, such a public event would be recorded by hundreds or even thousands of spectators with cameras, all connected to the internet. Mainstream news coverage would have to compete with the mass of user-captured material.

Contemporary examples of citizen journalism include citizen coverage of events in the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the experience of the citizens of Gaza. 'I'm not just covering the news, I'm living it', says Plestia Alaqad, former Instagrammer turned citizen journalist in Gaza.

Many news organisations already invite their audience to contribute eyewitness reports and imagery, but media outlets continue to wrestle with issues of quality control, hoaxes and manipulated imagery. Financial compensation for content owners is another difficult issue, as media organisations seek to avoid fuelling a 'feeding frenzy' of uncontrolled and intrusive amateur news collection.

Alexander Chadwick/AAP Images

Figure 5.5 An image taken on a mobile phone by Alexander Chadwick as he escaped from an underground tunnel at Kings Cross Station after the 2005 London bombings. The following day, this photo was used on the front page of *The New York Times*. News organisations could not gain access to the underground railway. The only footage came from those who had the foresight to film on their smartphones.

Hyper-local journalism

Many local newspapers have disappeared as the newspaper industry struggles to be profitable. Citizen journalism can act to fill in the gaps. Ordinary citizens can investigate local issues and act as watchdogs on the activities of local government or businesses.

Crowd-sourced journalism

Some news organisations invite people to participate in journalism by submitting knowledge, sharing opinions and sending in photos they have taken. For example, *The Guardian* newspaper invited 'the crowd' to examine hundreds of thousands of documents about an expense scandal involving British politicians in 2009. In the US, the general public was used for information-gathering during Hurricane Irene in 2011. Often, journalists organise and verify the information before publication. However, sometimes the volume of information is too great and publication happens regardless.

Blogs

Increasingly, bloggers are using video for political and social activism. Events such as the wars in Iraq and Syria allow those caught in the conflict to give voice to their own opinions and experience. As consumers of this content, we see a firsthand view of the conflict and have access to uncensored reporting and imagery. Locals may also have access to dangerous environments that western journalists are unable or unwilling to enter.

Issues in citizen journalism

Most criticisms of citizen journalism relate to three main areas of weakness: objectivity, quality and the effect on traditional journalism.

Figure 5.6 Podcaster and influencer Hannah Ferguson reaches nearly three million Australians every month and her Instagram following is over 290 000. She interviews politicians and even attended the presentation of the federal budget in Canberra. Her independent news commentary means that she is a contemporary kind of citizen journalist as well as an influencer.

Objectivity

Balanced reporting or impartiality (not taking sides) is an important principle in traditional journalism. It is included in the journalist's codes of ethics in most western democracies. This kind of 'objectivity' aims to limit the journalist to report only the facts – without emotion or political views interfering.

Objectivity was seen as a way of gaining the trust of the audience. The more a news outlet was trusted, the larger the audience became, and therefore advertisers could be charge more.

Journalistic objectivity is a set of practices that are taught within the profession and during university training. These include interviewing a range of people, the presentation of opposing points of view, supporting evidence or verification, and careful structuring of the news story. Citizen journalists are not obliged to follow any of these procedures. Some of the appeal of citizen journalism is the expression of emotion and of strong points of view.

Quality of the journalism

Mainstream journalists are concerned about quality control, bias and accuracy. They claim the assumption that everyone can be a journalist devalues the skill and experience of professional journalists and editors. Journalist James Farmer asks, 'When was the last time you encountered

a "citizen doctor", valued a report by a "citizen researcher" or was in a plane flown by a "citizen pilot"?' While there are exceptions, the quality of citizen journalism to date is questionable. Nonetheless, citizen-contributed content that can be used, analysed and recompiled by professional journalists and editors represents the power of citizen journalism.

Some critics are worried about the ease with which manipulated images can be distributed through citizen media channels. Journalists are bound by professional ethics, while average users may not fully understand the consequences of their actions.

On the other hand, Yahoo and Reuters identified that there is already a lot of quality amateur journalism being created by their users. To create a more efficient process for soliciting and publishing user-contributed content, Yahoo and Reuters pioneered the organised user contribution of news footage through their *You Witness* program.

The effect on traditional journalism

Many traditional news organisations have been somewhat encouraging of citizen journalists. News organisations have considered citizen journalism content as convenient source material for stories. However, the content has often been criticised as being untrustworthy, unethical, too emotional or subjective.

Traditional news sources are also forcing journalists to produce content faster and with fewer resources. Mainstream journalists have to write, film and edit their own stories. This is partly in response to competition from other sources of news, such as citizen journalists.

Citizen journalism and misinformation

While citizen journalism has transformed the media landscape, it can also lead to the spread of **misinformation** and **disinformation** (see Nelson *Film, Television & New Media QCE Units 1 & 2*, Chapter 8 and Units 3 & 4, Chapter 6, page 82). This can happen in the following ways:

1 Deliberate spreading of misinformation
2 Amplification of conspiracy theories
3 Manipulation of footage

Social media users find it harder to understand information in terms of credibility. What was once easily dismissed as a fringe conspiracy can now take

on forms that mirror legitimate journalistic practices, increasing the consumption of fringe conspiracy as mainstream fact.

The viral nature of social media content on platforms presents a significant challenge to control of misinformation culture. It threatens to accelerate alternative narratives, sometimes allowing them to reach audiences much larger than traditional media outlets.

Echo chambers and **filter bubbles** can be sustained in these new forms of reporting. These digital spaces can replicate and reinforce misinformation ecosystems that resist external fact-checking or contradictory information.

5.3 ACTIVITIES

1 **Create** a timeline of the period since the year 2000 to the present, recording events where citizen journalism played a key role in providing the imagery or the information. **Analyse** the timeline you've created and comment on any trends. **Examine** the following areas of investigation in your analysis:
   - proportion of citizen journalism that is image-based versus information-based
   - role that luck plays in citizen journalism
   - trend increases in citizen journalism over time, or at certain times, such as during crises.

2 Select a news story into which citizen journalism has had significant input. Respond to the areas of investigation in the following table.

DESCRIBE	ANALYSE	EVALUATE
Create a timeline of the period since the year 2000 to the present.	**Analyse** the impact of the citizen journalism component by breaking down the story into its **constituent parts**, determining the percentage of citizen journalism.	**Evaluate** the status of the citizen journalism components, **making judgements** about the ways in which the inclusion of citizen journalism adds to or detracts from the credibility of the news story.

SPACED PRACTICE

Stimulus: *Bluey*, season 2, episode 13 'Dad Baby'.

Contextual information: *Bluey* is an animated production based in Queensland and originally commissioned by the ABC. In 2019, Disney purchased the TV and streaming rights. Season 2, episode 13 'Dad Baby' cannot be viewed on Disney+, as the entire episode was banned. The episode deals with a comical imitation of Bluey's younger sister's birth. Disney never gave an official reason for dropping the episode.

Question (Key concept – Institutions): Analyse the practices of the Disney global media institution that enable and/or constrain access to the 'Dad Baby' episode of *Bluey*. Consider social, political or economic factors and the context of marketing and distribution strategies. **Evaluate** the institutional participation and consumption of culturally diverse audience groups and implications of media convergence. **Justify** your response with examples from the episode.

Weblink
'Dad Baby', *Bluey*

Resource
Scaffolding

6 Big Tech, surveillance capitalism, polarisation and conspiracy theories

BIG TECH AND MEDIA ORGANISATIONS

Ex-news editor, Eric Beecher, says that media mogul owners have made profit with little regard for the truth. In his book, *The Men Who Killed the News*, Beecher argues a small number of individuals wield enormous wealth and influence and have eroded trust in media organisations.

Beecher says that the media hold a special place within democracy, yet they operate with a very low level of regulation. Powerful newspaper owners of old have been replaced by Big Tech bosses whose integrated empires now cover news, social media, purchasing and recreational platforms for digital delivery.

Big Tech

'Big Tech' refers to the group of multinational technology companies who dominate the sector. According to the World Economic Forum, the power consumption of the information technology industry is estimated to be 20 per cent of all electricity produced in 2025. Processing and storage can be outsourced to the 'cloud' instead of on the device itself. The cloud is a network of energy-consuming industrial data centres that store, process and back-up replicated information across the globe.

Data from individuals, which is centralised and distributed, provides a raw material which can be mined for information and profit. Large data sets on groups are also exactly what is needed to train AI models across multiple industries. AI and quantum computing require a lot of power and Microsoft has signed an agreement that could lead to the reopening of a nuclear power plant near New York in the US. One of the units at the Three Mile Island plant is infamous

for the worst US nuclear accident. It closed in 1979 after a partial meltdown of a reactor core. Though nuclear power is a relatively expensive and high-risk electricity source, Big Tech is looking to secure its own power if supply cannot keep up with growth. Google's parent company has also signed deals to buy power for AI, building more nuclear plants up to 2035. In their AI insights article of 2024, the multinational investor business, Goldman Sachs Research, reports that an average question in Chat GPT consumed about 10 times the electricity of a Google search.

Big data

The exponential curve of worldwide communication, digital economies and stored information is growing steeper. This constant flow of digital communication is known as the **datasphere**.

There are five 'V' factors that many Big Tech organisations use to determine what is meant by big data. They are:

1 **Volume.** The amount of data is large. Storage requirements are beyond normal domestic resources and are expanding over time.
2 **Variety.** Many diverse sources are contributing data. Physical locations, search terms, followers, purchases, networks of friends and genre of content contribute to a big data set.
3 **Velocity.** Information flow does not stop to be analysed. As the data is never complete, real-time processes try to 'understand' online users.
4 **Veracity.** The information may not be true. Users may deliberately mislead the information gatherers, or simply borrow a device from a friend. Data sets are assumed to have a certain amount of 'noise' that pollutes trustworthiness.
5 **Value.** The worth of knowledge to a particular group for a particular purpose may not be fixed in time. A retail entity can judge the value of

Calculator
Carbon calculator

Weblink
The internet consumes extraordinary amounts of energy.

Resource
Key concept test

Figure 6.1 World data growth trend is an exponential curve. Experts estimate in 2025 that data will be ~175 million, million gigabytes (zettabytes). Accelerating data volumes from the 'Rest of the World' are gradually being shadowed by growth in China, Europe, Middle East and Asia.
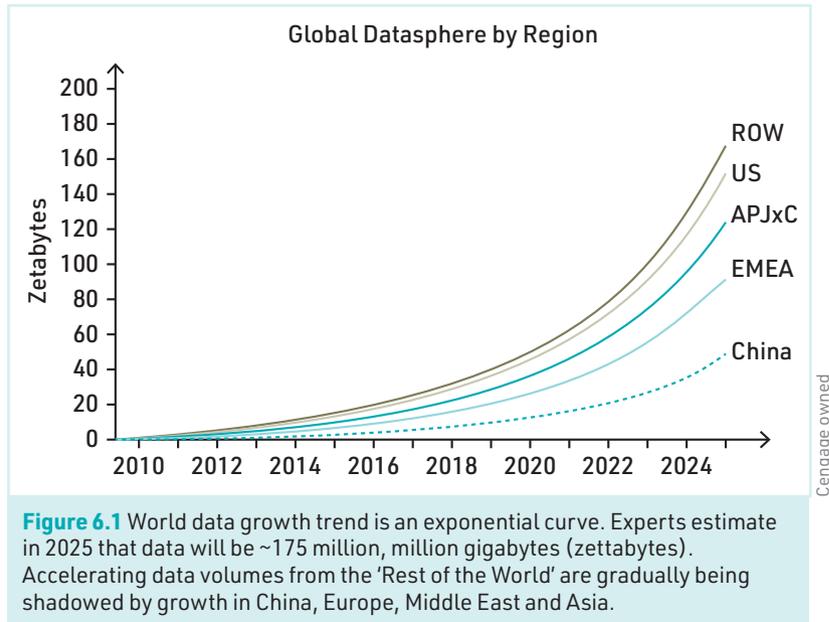
big data collection if it leads to more sales or profits, but the future value of that data may not be known until the next generation of products becomes available. The potential future value of data for governments and corporations is a strong incentive to retain information.

Big data organisations

Globally, in the mid-2020s, the five most valuable companies (worth billions each) trade in big data.

Cooperating companies, or **cartels**, have been regarded suspiciously when they dominated industry sectors such as 'big oil'. Even the term 'big business' carries negative connotations of prioritising profits over consumers and smaller businesses.

Some big data organisations directly interact with audiences through their ownership of platforms. As an economist, Professor Paul Seabright says that platforms harvest some form of payment for facilitating relationships, regardless of whether they are primarily social or economic ones. According to Professor Seabright, one way of defining a platform is to test if it can be thought of as facilitating relationships that would not otherwise exist.

Surveillance capitalism

Filmmaker and sculptor, Richard Serra, made an important statement about broadcast television in 1973. In his collaboration video art piece, *Television Delivers People*, Serra asserts to the audience, the viewer is not the customer: 'You are the product', a

widely accepted condition for 'free' digital resources in the 21st century. Media creates content that is often the byproduct of the main industry: selling access to the audience.

Surveillance capital goes beyond the media experience and into other spheres of activity in the real world. Rapidly expanding real-time measurement of audience behaviour is gaining importance for surveillance capitalism. Data businesses think of consumer devices as the 'end point'; everything from phones to smart fridges connected through **The Internet of Things (IoT)**.

Figure 6.2 The Microsoft facility in the Netherlands is surrounded by giant air conditioners to cool the online servers. The surveillance capital business models create a huge storage and computing demand. They rely on extensive, often fragile connectivity infrastructure to collect and process real time behaviour, delivering it back to industrial scale machines.

The trend in data businesses is to move the consumer information 'from the edge to the core' (e.g. to shift the end-point device information to the cloud servers). Despite devices having more onboard storage than ever, 2019 was the crossover point: more information around the world was stored in online servers than on local devices.

The extraction imperative

Professor Emerita at the Harvard Business School, Shoshana Zuboff says that surveillance capital is on a mission to keep expanding data resources. This is to extract patterns that predict human behaviour and modify it through practices known as nudging, herding and tuning.

Zuboff coined the term **informating** to describe the conversion of the real world into a digital form that is visible to information organisations. Her three laws are:

1   Everything that can be automated will be automated.
2   Everything that can be informed will be informed.
3   Every digital application that can be used for surveillance and control will be used for surveillance and control, irrespective of its originating intention.

Default saving online through design affordances of device settings increases the extraction opportunities. Lower energy, and often more secure, personal storage offline, is made less convenient than giving up data.

The shadow text

Professor Zuboff identifies a digital **public text** and a **shadow text**. The shadow text is the opaque, hidden product generated by the public text. Activity online leaves a **digital footprint** that the user has little control over, even after deleting. Searches, emails, payments, phone calls and texts generate an automatic metadata trail as a consequence of those interactions.

Asymmetry of power

The annexing of shadow text as the property of surveillance capital creates an imbalance of power. The information is about us, but it is not for our interrogation or correction, let alone control. The hidden nature of the information means we don't know what it is, how others will interpret it or what

it will be used for. For Zuboff, personal information sovereignty is about who knows and who decides.

Generating data

Experts say that in 2018, on average, a person had around 700 digital interactions per day. The IoT and real-time information put 2025 estimates at 5000 data points per day, per person. Consumer advocate Choice found that seven out of 10 surveyed car brands in Australia were tracking drivers and potentially selling data to third parties. Modern cars have been called smartphones on wheels, making them spontaneous generators of invasive moving image media. They are data collectors on human behaviour and media consumption within the car's connected infotainment ecosystem.

Engagement strategy

Social media platforms aim to engage and sustain audience participation. Heightened engagement happens when users are extremely positive or extremely negative about what they see. Items that anger an individual are often shared with others who feel the same, increasing engagement with the platform.

Applications have the ability to monitor scrolling within each page and create pop-up offers if the cursor moves towards exiting the page. Cookies on the user's device can report back about digital activity across the whole internet. News feeds are shaped by preferences across the web, and if new material causes 'engagement' to drop, machine learning is used to alter the content delivery.

Weblinks
The potential downside of fitness trackers: Insurers selling your data

Tesla workers shared sensitive images recorder by customer cars

Mark Andrews/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 6.3 Integrated cameras and microphones in vehicles raise privacy concerns for drivers, passengers and people near parked cars. Location and driving behaviour, as well as voice recognition data, can be collected. Tesla workers reported sharing videos from the cars' automatic cameras.

'Everyone is getting their own custom reality . . . like a drug we don't know we're taking because it is made to feel real . . . It's making extreme people more extreme because middle-ground news is dropping out, making it harder to get consensus.'

Mark Pesce, futurist author and podcaster

The individual in the data

An **algorithm** is a formula for solving problems in various steps, and the way they function in social media is working against democracy, according to futurist author Mark Pesce and many others. Political parties access data sets and can cross-reference these with publicly available information on voters. Advertising can be purchased to trigger a response in *that* particular voter. Differential pricing technology (where consumers are offered different prices based on their location or income) can be used to deliver tailored messages to individual voters.

It is possible to identify individuals from anonymised data. Intersecting information from different sources can produce enough 'resolution' to recognise a person's details. Triangulation, similar to finding a phone location, can be used to match specific facts from the databases such as mapping in dozens of unique circles to pinpoint an individual. Even without a name, a detailed story of a person can come into sharp focus by cross-matching datasets.

Behavioural change

Big data is interested in the motivating mood behind purchases. The continuous monitoring of multiple facets of activity is similar to living in a perpetual experiment. While it is considered unethical to conduct human experiments without gaining 'informed consent' from the subjects, digital platform sign-up conditions are wide ranging.

Facebook and university researchers ran a 2012 experiment on 689 000 users without their knowledge. Pictures, videos, comments and links posted by other people were manipulated to exclude positive emotional content from certain users, and to exclude negative content from others. Unknowingly, users adopted the same pattern in their contributions that reflected their feeds.
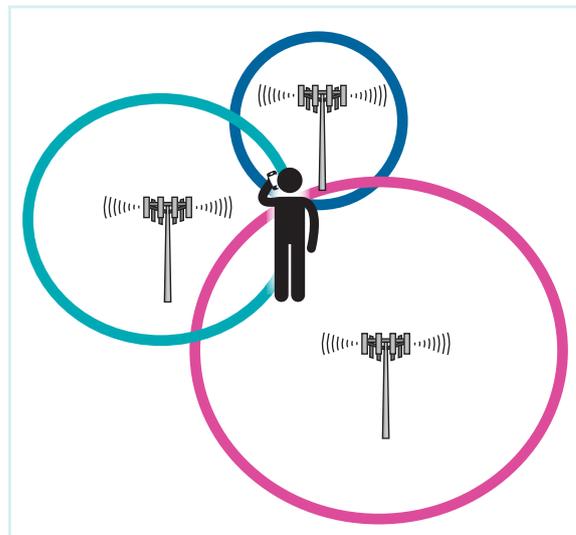
Figure 6.4 Signals from connected devices can be triangulated to pinpoint a location. The exact distance from a tower or satellite can be measured by the time it takes a signal to travel. A distance from two transmitters gives two possible locations, but the third locks-in one exact spot. Each transmitter only 'knows' a vague detail about where the caller is. Once the transmitters are networked, the location is precise and verifiable. In a similar way, individuals can be identified from anonymised data by overlaying intersecting information.

Official data collection

In the film, *Minority Report* (2002), the predictive 'pre-crime unit' arrests criminals *before* they commit the crime. Big data algorithms are already delivering this sci-fi scenario as reality. Governments monitor media for illegal activity and aim to predict terrorist-style events. In 2017, the Australian Government's data retention laws came into effect. **Internet providers (IPs)** must store all user metadata for at least two years, including:

- geographic location of the user
- user names, phone numbers and IP addresses of recipients of communications

- date, time, duration and network connection details
- linked information, such as name, address, phone number and billing details
- the source of any phone call, text, voice or email message
- the type of communication, such as social media post, chat, forum, voice message, email or text.

Privacy protections

From 2014, Australian citizens were given the right to opt-out of marketing lists. Personal information collected for other purposes should not be used in marketing. Companies sending information overseas must have the individual's permission or make sure there is similar privacy laws to Australia.

Information can only be used for the exact purpose for which it was given. This personal information protected by law includes name, signature, medical and bank records, date of birth and telephone number. Organisations can only record sensitive information with consent.

Big data and society

Closed thinking

Confirmation bias is the tendency to cling to a mistaken conclusion because it agrees with an existing belief. Social media is already prone to this due to the nature of 'friending' people with similar interests. Adding self-fulfilling news and opinion preferences to social media may bring a blinding confirmation bias to what is already an echo chamber where we are hearing back our own opinion.

Censorship

Some news organisations and whole countries are known to have blocked content they disagree with. Winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, Maria Ressa, warns that technology companies who allow government censorship and misinformation are increasing the risk of authoritarianism.

Democratic countries have banned symbols, phrases and certain content that is generally considered offensive within the culture. The Australian eSafety Commissioner ordered Facebook and X to take down footage of the stabbing of an Assyrian preacher in his church, committed in Sydney in 2024. Australia's *Online Safety Act 2021* gives the Commissioner take-

down powers for abhorrent material such as violent crime. Despite the incident being declared an act of terrorism, owner of X, Elon Musk, argued access to the video was a matter of free speech. He said the Australian eSafety boss was acting as global censorship commissar: 'Our concern is that if *any* country is allowed to censor content for *all* countries . . . then what is to stop any country from controlling the entire internet?' (ABC News, April 2024)

The social structures of social media

Social media has come under significant scrutiny due to its impact on mental health. Governments have considered many actions, including nationwide bans for young people, because of the impact of the social media experience. However, film scholar Matthew Flisfeder argues that social media is more than a failure to realise its social potential – the existing problems are related to how it has become a system of digital labour driven by critical factors such as the exploitation of user engagement, perpetual dissatisfaction and profit.

At its base is the algorithm, says Flisfeder. Algorithms are typically built on the logic of profit. They use data gathered from social media platforms to construct circumstances that sustain user engagement to obtain more data to sell to advertisers and other organisations. These algorithms serve the economic interests of the Big Tech corporations who own the platforms. Ultimately, participation is structured to maximise engagement and value for profit.

Algorithmic desire

What keeps users locked into the social media machine? Algorithmic desire, argues Matthew Flisfeder. This refers to how algorithms manipulate human desire by constantly deferring satisfaction while simultaneously promoting ongoing engagement. The user's desires are never fully met, keeping them in a state of constant searching. Algorithms curate user interactions that depend on an unending cycle of desire without any meaningful fulfilment. This is offered as a solution by Big Tech corporations who continually seek ways to lock users into social media and spend more time on platforms.

Social media as an ecology

Flisfeder's analysis also promotes an understanding of social media as an ecology – a dynamic, interdependent system that shapes and organises human behaviour, relationships and cultural production. Social media leverages algorithms to influence how individuals interact with the world. Within this ecology, platforms serve as mediators of complex human interaction, structuring the ebb and flow of communication, validation and identity formation:

- **Algorithms act as the environment.** The algorithmic structure functions like an environment in which users are constantly navigating ideology. Algorithms create a feedback loop where user behaviour shapes the environment, and the environment (the algorithm) shapes future behaviour.
- **Users perform for the algorithm.** Users are not only responding to the social and cultural expectations of other users, but are also 'performing for the algorithm'. The platform's algorithms prioritise certain types of content, incentivising users to modify their behaviour in ways that maximise visibility and engagement. This leads to a cycle of constant self-promotion and identity curation, where users adapt to the ecological demands of the platform to ensure their relevance within the system.
- **The ecology impacts on identity and relationships.** Social media creates an ecology where identity is shaped by the pressures of visibility and being constantly measured against other users. This encourages users to prioritise appearances and performance, making social media a simple search to be noticed. Because this ecology fosters competition, feelings of alienation are commonly associated with users caught in this cycle as they become disconnected from their authentic selves.

6.1 ACTIVITIES

1   **Apply** persuasive language to argue your opinion on government regulation over **user/ audience** data. As a class, **identify** a wide variety of connected devices in students' families and workplaces – the IoT.
     In pairs, research the potential data (and shadow text) generated from one of the appliance **technologies**: speakers, lightbulbs, doorbells and devices. Research institutional ownership and data sharing to determine who knows your data, who decides the access and who regulates who decides. Write your individual persuasive response.

2   **Evaluate** the purpose and ways of interaction for a specific platform. Open a specific app on a digital device. Use the 'save as' function (or nearest equivalent, e.g. post, share, comment, etc.) and take a screenshot of the default location for storage (or default audience settings) that **enable or constrain**. **Analyse** the saving/sharing technology design (affordances) which nudge the audience. **Identify** the ownership of the platform through research and **explain** any connection to big data parent companies and moving image media. **Evaluate** the ways individual interactions contribute to an **institution's** business model.

3   **Analyse** a local user group of a particular technology you use. Plan a time to access a social media platform, game environment, web page with comments or an email list you are familiar with. Take a screen capture to **construct** a list of contributors. **Identify** the **audience** by listing similarities and differences between individuals, such as age, location and interests. **Evaluate** motivations for engagement in this platform, listing benefits and limitations. **Analyse** the technology features that provide for audience interaction.

INSTITUTIONS AND REGULATION IN A PARTICIPATION CONTEXT

Regulation of the industry practices of participatory media provides an important context for multi-platform moving-image media.

Unlike the US, Australia does not have a Bill of Rights that mentions freedom of expression. However, because Australia is a signatory to various human rights conventions, there is an obligation to protect freedom of expression. All regulations must meet three conditions.

1   **Legality.** There must be a precise and clear legal justification for any restrictions.
2   **Necessity and proportionality.** Any restrictions must be necessary and the least restrictive possible to achieve the aim.

3   **Legitimate reasons**. There must be exhaustive and convincing grounds for the limitations.

Regulations also provide for the presumption of freedom. That means they need to be narrowly defined and not operate in a way that is too broad or indiscriminate.

Reasons for media regulation

In Australia, government policy is often aimed at two key areas of concern: (1) regulating the prospect that the media may do harm, or (2) encouraging the implementation of certain national media policies.

'Harm' as a reason for regulation

Policy documents tend to define harm as any psychological disturbance or damage that can be measured or seen by others. Much of the research in support of this has been aimed at showing some kind of negative outcome from exposure to 'harmful media'. In the 2020s, social media is particularly under the spotlight for the Australian Government and governments worldwide.

Harm is understood to vary with the degree of vulnerability of the audience, and is seen as being long lasting or serious.

The following groups are seen as susceptible to harm from inappropriate media participation or consumption:

- **Children and young people.** The under-18 audience is widely regarded as vulnerable to harm and susceptible to other influences. Governments in most countries have sought to protect this audience. There are several reasons for this:
  - Brain development patterns in children and young people mean that cognitive or thinking processes are not fully formed. There is some recent evidence that the process of brain development may continue well past the age of 18.
  - There is a widely accepted belief that children and young people need protection in a number of areas – not just media consumption.
  - Children are an investment in the future and therefore need careful nurturing.
- **All adults at certain times of their lives.** There are times when adults need protection from harm as well:
  - Bullying and domestic violence. Cyber bullying can be experienced by anyone

regardless of their age. The *Online Safety Act 2021* is aimed at protecting people over 18 from threats of violence or from **doxing**.
- Defamation. Harmful media publication can destroy people's reputations. Defamation laws provide for people to take legal action if material is published that harms them. Defences include public interest, fair reports of proceedings and truth.
- Material of restricted classification. The Australian classification system allows adults to choose films and publications rated from G to R18+.

Offence

Offence – categorised as displeasure, annoyance or hurt feelings about a perceived insult – is typically personal or subjective. It does not need to be observed by others, and is not taken to be continuing or permanent, although people may remember the moment of the event for some time after. Offence on its own is a concept that can be difficult to assess or verify. Anyone can say they are 'offended'; there is no way to measure it. For this reason, attempting to protect audiences from offence alone violates the three conditions of regulations: legality, necessity and proportionality, and legitimate reasons. It can lead to censorship.

Australian media regulations do not include offence within the definition of harm. There is no right not to ever be offended. However, there is a legislative obligation to prevent 'hate speech'. Hate speech is defined as:

- inciting national, religious or racial hatred that encourages hostility, violence or discrimination
- inciting genocide or spreading propaganda for war.

'Media policy' as a reason for regulation

Protecting Australian society is an important aspect of media regulation. The main 'media policy' reasons for regulation include:

- **Misinformation and disinformation.** An important goal is to give the public accurate and impartial information. The spread of information that is misleading or false (misinformation) and deliberately intended to deceive (disinformation) is a concern to 75 per cent of Australians, according to a 2024 digital

Weblink
ACMA: Foreign ownership of Australian media assets

news report by University of Canberra. The Australian Code of Practice on Disinformation and Misinformation (2022) is a voluntary code of practice that has been signed by eight technology companies.

- **Media diversity.** Australian governments have always sought to maintain media diversity. Notwithstanding, Australia has one of the most concentrated and least diverse levels of media ownership in the developed world. Structural change in the media landscape is offering solutions, but also creating new problems. Approximately 79 per cent of adult Australians are now accessing news content online, compared to 58 per cent using television, according to a 2023 study by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA).
- **National identity.** There are regulations to provide for Australian content on television (see *Nelson Film, Television & New Media QCE Units 1&2*, pages 118–119).
- **National independence.** Foreign investment in Australian media companies is restricted by the *Broadcasting Services Act* (1992, amendment in 2018). This Act is limited to commercial television, radio or a corporation that produces newspapers (under certain circumstances). Foreign investment must also be approved by the Federal Treasurer. Streaming services are not covered unless they also hold commercial media licences.

Figure 6.5 The 'Birds aren't real' slogan is a satire of disinformation material and conspiracy theories. The slogan was created by American comedian Peter McIndoe who 'claimed' that all birds in the US were exterminated and replaced by drones to spy on US citizens. They sit on power lines to recharge, and their droppings on cars are a secret tracking method.

Regulating social media

The Australian Government has legislated to restrict access to social media sites for children and younger teenagers under the age of 16. In 2024, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said, 'What we want is our youngest Australians spending more time outside playing sport, engaging with each other in a normal way and spending less time online. And one way to do that is through restrictions on social media.'

The *Online Safety Amendment Bill* (2024) is aimed at mitigating 'harms' from social media use among young people. The law places the responsibility on the social media companies, not parents or young people themselves. The Bill defines certain social media companies as 'age-restricted'. Accounts on these platforms are limited to people who are over 16 years. These age-restricted companies have the following characteristics:

- Their main purpose is to enable online social interaction between two or more users.
- Users are able to interact with each other.
- Users can post material.

Social media platforms such as Snapchat, TikTok, Facebook, Instagram and X are defined as 'age-restricted'. From the start, YouTube was given an exemption because it also has an important educational role, along with Headspace, Kids Helpline and Google Classroom.

The law requires age-restricted social media companies to do the following:

- Take reasonable steps to prevent Australians under 16 years from opening social media accounts. This requires some kind of age assurance.
- Protect privacy by not requiring government identification evidence and by providing reasonable alternative identification means for users.
- Not use government or commercial digital ID accreditation services to verify age.
- Destroy the information after collection.
- Not use the information for any other purpose, including targeted ads, unless full voluntary consent is obtained.

Australian media literacy academics Aleesha Rodriguez, Michael Dezuanni and Tama Leaver say that an approach to this issue could be to demand more from technology companies

Jim West/Alamy Stock Photo

to design age-appropriate digital experiences to support children and their parents. They argue just saying that parents should restrict or monitor social media use places an unfair burden on individual families.

At present many countries are struggling with ways to regulate social media. The Forum for Information and Democracy was established to make recommendations to 38 countries, including Australia, UK, France, Germany, India and South Korea. Core recommendations include:

- **Create a digital platform building code**. The code would outline certain safety and quality requirements that prevent harm. 'I have to do more safety testing and go through more compliance to create a toaster than to create Facebook,' said contributor Christopher Wylie.
- **Make details of algorithms transparent to researchers**. Transparency could include how content is moderated, which content reaches the highest number of users and how user data is used.
- **Ban 'dark patterns'**. These are deceptive menus or interfaces that deliberately confuse the user. For example, they can make it very difficult to delete your account.
- **Limit the use of micro-targeting**. Advertising that can target small groups of individuals based on gathering up carefully selected data can be an invasion of privacy. Data privacy laws could restrict this.
- **Restrict hate speech and terrorism**. The definition of these should be aligned with the United Nations treaty organisations.
- **Allow users agency over their privacy.** Give users the right to balance privacy preferences and their desire to use a platform.
- **Disclose personalised targeting.** Give users the opportunity to know why information and ads were targeted at them.

6.2 ACTIVITIES

1   **Evaluate** a media regulation, such as the 2024 social media age restriction legislation, according to the three criteria explained on page 78–79: legality, necessity and proportionality, and legitimate reasons.

2   Some countries are now moving to regulate for diversity in the *content* of the media, forcing owners to give access to a range of points of view. **Create** a set of regulations for the media to force greater diversity of content rather than ownership. Specify how this diversity is to be achieved.

3   **Evaluate** a social media platform you use according to whether it conforms to any of the recommendations of the Forum for Information and Democracy.

POLARISATION AND CONSPIRACY THEORIES

Why polarisation occurs (algorithms)

Digital platforms are optimised for engagement. Audiences tend to participate and share when content causes strong emotional responses, which can be positive or negative. Algorithms in turn feed similar content, which creates high levels of engagement. This adds up to an exaggeration of extremes, and a reduction in 'the middle ground', where algorithms do not detect frenetic audience activity.

Confirmation bias

Audiences bring various cognitive biases that can be conscious or unconscious. Confirmation bias is fed when media reinforces an existing viewpoint and audiences are unaware of or avoid alternate perspectives (see Big data and society, page 77).

Why conspiracy theories spread

According to journalist and author Mike Rothschild the high rate of societal change and uncertainty is a driver of conspiracy. He believes that people gain a sense of importance if someone stands against their values or interests. When things happen that people disagree with, it is easier to rationalise it if there is a 'villain' behind the circumstance.

Recent conspiracies are not just rumours within the masses, according to Rothschild. Conspiracies are now spread, reinforced and validated by those with political and economic power.

'The film illustrates how even the clearest scientific warning can be swamped by humanity's focus on misinformation. Here we witness how the plain facts fail to get the attention needed to prevent a global catastrophe.'

Dr Brad Carter, Professor (physics), Dean of research infrastructure, UniSQ

A professor of social psychology at Cambridge University, Sander van der Linden says people who feel they are powerless or victims are more likely to believe conspiracy. Conspiracy theories can sometimes be true. The US Watergate scandal forced US President Nixon to resign over political spying. Some see this event as validating conspiracy theories and a turning point in trust in elected governments.

Misinformation and disinformation

Misinformation is information or content that is incorrect or made-up that is spread deliberately or not to deceive. Disinformation is intentionally deceptive. For example, breaking news stories may have inaccurate facts in the early stages of a disaster. Individuals may post unresearched facts online which they assume to be true (see *Nelson Film, Television & New Media QCE Units 1 & 2*, Chapter 8).

Malinformation encompasses facts that have been taken out of the original context to mislead or do harm. For example, dated information that is resolved but which is presented as latest news to show a negative view of a person or behaviour. It could include false dates or the context surrounding a photo or video. Even if moving-image media has not been altered, pictures have the power to reinforce a false context.

Public posting of content that was intended to be private is another example of harm from malinformation. The changing of context to public information without consent can cause harm, even if the information is true. 'Document dropping' or doxing can include sharing of private photos or the malicious release of personal information.

Disinformation is false information that is *intentionally* spread. It has its roots in propaganda and is intentionally designed to spread false information and manipulate facts. Its purpose is to achieve political or military ends.

Fake social media campaigns are further complicated by foreign interference with genuine influencers. Podcasters and live streamers were allegedly paid up to $US10 million by a foreign

broadcaster, according to a US justice department case in 2024. The social media activities from a foreign government increased divisions within the US and affected public opinion on political matters.

In what some have called the 'post-truth era', realities that disagree with certain political viewpoints have been labelled by real-world politicians as 'alternative facts'.

Don't Look Up (2021) is a film written by director Adam McKay as an allegory about climate change denial. Instead of politicians and business failing to act on environmental damage, McKay's story shows the media and their audience ignoring an asteroid collision, even when they see it coming. According to astronomer and Director of the University of Southern Queensland Centre for Astrophysics, Brad Carter, the film deals with a problem of signal-to-noise ratio. Technicians use this term to compare the amount of valuable information (signal) with the background interference (noise). Truths in traditional and social media can be buried in lightweight **infotainment** and disinformation.

Figure 6.6 Climate change protestors incorporate a film reference to convey the urgency of environmental action. *Don't Look Up* (2021) was written to represent the climate crisis, but the author Adam McKay saw relevance to its release during COVID-19 misinformation: 'It really was about how much we've fouled the means of communication, and how monetising the very way we talk to each other could be the end of us.'

Spotting extremist and fake information

The International Federation of Library Associations and First Draft News have strategies for evaluating potentially fake information. It includes checking for parody, reliability, correct context, verifiable authorship, other sources, altered content and the bias of the audience (see *Nelson Film, Television & New Media, QCE Units 1 & 2*, pages 123 & 126). Critical media literacy practices should have viewers also asking: Who is left out of these facts? Who will benefit if the audience believes or disbelieves this story?

Social media has the potential to give voice to ordinary citizens by uniting with others of a like-mind. These bottom-up democracy style movements are called 'grassroots'. The digital era has made it possible for political or corporate interests to fake up what appears to be grassroots campaigns.

Extreme opinions within follower groups can remain hidden from mainstream criticism. Exclusivity and lack of tolerance for others can be a sign of extremism. Physical actions against others may also be advocated online.

Adapting to the media landscape

Individuals can make a difference in the chain of information. The power of disinformation in the digital era is its ability to spread quickly. If content is re-shared to the audience by a trusted influencer or a personal friend, it is more likely to be believed, regardless of the original source. The re-sharing is what makes information viral. If a story is re-shared to two other people for every one user who receives it, the audience goes on doubling with every re-share. As with a biological virus, this allows rapid multiplying, which can reach millions, even billions of users.

The volume of information circulating on social media during the COVID-19 pandemic allowed the integration of falsehoods. The World Health Organization labelled 2020 as an '**Infodemic**'; that is, too much information, including misinformation that creates confusion and can cause harm. Belief or denial about vaccines, lockdowns, mask wearing and the existence of the virus became a matter of political ideology, especially in the US.

Protections against conspiracy theories

Research from psychologist, Sacha Altay, shows people tend to believe that *others* are more likely to believe falsehoods than *they* were. He also found in experiments that higher exposure to fake stories did not increase belief in them, but created mistrust overall and over-confidence in the users' own ability to identify truth.

Debunking and pre-bunking

Correcting facts after the event is known as debunking. Some research found the process of labelling facts as incorrect can reinforce the idea of a conspiracy against those very facts. An alternative is to predict the conspiracies likely to emerge and pre-empt them, setting out facts ahead of events and rumours. This is called pre-bunking.

Media literacy

Based on the idea of traditional reading, media literacy is the ability to 'read' the meaning of a media text. Critical thinking within this literacy brings an awareness of the construction of the text, the agenda behind its creation and interpretations by various audiences.

Individual empowerment (agency)

While research suggests conspiracies rise in moments of societal tension and crisis, an
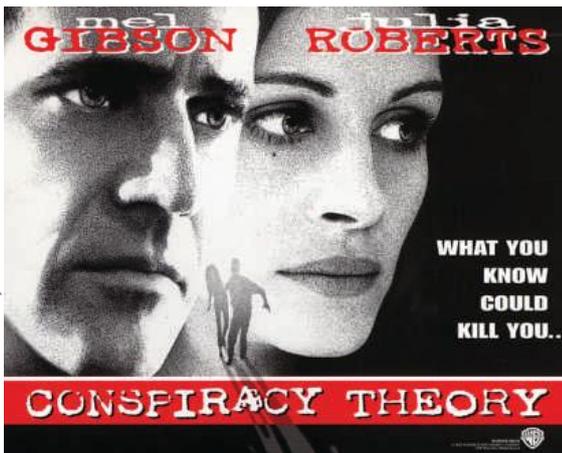
RGR Collection/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 6.7 *Conspiracy Theory* (1997) stars a paranoid character played by Mel Gibson, who believes NASA space shuttle flights were used to control earthquakes. In 2024, real-world weather forecasters received threats of beating, arrest and death from conspiracy theorists who believed the weather bureau *controlled* the weather. Two hurricanes hit Florida 12 days apart, prompting an American congresswoman to claim the storms were created and purposefully directed by the US government.

Weblinks
Misinformation poses a bigger threat to democracy than you might think.

Conspiracy theory was fake news: Newsweek

Answers
How "prebunking" misinformation works

increased sense of control for ordinary people may reduce belief in unlikely conspiracy, according to some studies.

Some research suggests that actual belief in the accuracy of conspiracy theories may not be the issue. Philosophy Professor Marianna Ganapini says that supporting certain conspiracy theories signals membership of a particular group. They work to allow admittance to the group. Sometimes, conspiracies may be shared with the aim of gathering believers in the 'secret facts', but they also serve as a belonging communication.

6.3 ACTIVITIES

1   **Analyse** features of a platform that allows audience interaction about a conspiracy theory. **Identify** a clickbait entry point to conspiracy information. **Analyse** the images or information hook. **Investigate** moving-image media offered as supporting evidence. **Describe** the technological characteristics of the features that invite and sustain participation. List multi-platform sources connected with the story. **Examine** the sources for credibility (*Nelson Film Television and New Media QCE Units 1&2,* page 124).

2   **Evaluate** the purpose and ways of interaction for a specific platform hosting an implausible conspiracy theory, for example, flat Earth, holocaust denial, accidental black holes, hollow Earth, the plandemic. **Consider** the economic, political, social and cultural factors that might influence audience participation. **Come to a judgement** about group membership signalling and the belonging function of the belief. Do this by listing wider attitudes behind the conspiracy, such as mistrust of particular institutions. **Compare** facts offered by the conspiracy with those presented by de-bunking sources of that conspiracy. List the references.

3   **Evaluate** the impact a conspiracy-based film narrative may have on real-world beliefs. **Apply** research and summarising skills (possibly viewing) to report back to the class on the screen text. **Analyse** the narrative devices and production context appeal that invite and sustain audience interest. Some film examples are: *The X-Files* (1998), *Operation Avalanche* (2016), *The Da Vinci Code* (2006), *The Social Dilemma* (2020), *Fahrenheit 9/11* (2004), *The Great Hack* (2019), *JFK* (1991), *Capricorn One* (1977), *Soylent Green* (1973), *Icarus* (2017), *Wag the Dog* (1997). **Apply** film terms to describe a scene or shot that encapsulates the conspiracy theme.

SPACED PRACTICE

Weblinks
Tech giants call on Trump to target Australia over media laws

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Trump urged to target 'coercive and discriminatory' Australian media laws by Musk's X, Apple, Google and Meta: *The Guardian*

Resource
Scaffolding

Stimulus: Tech giants call on Trump to target Australia over media laws– By Adam Vidler

Contextual information: The US Presidential inauguration of Donald Trump was attended by Big Tech billionaires with media interests: Elon Musk (X), Mark Zuckerberg (Meta), Sundar Pichai (Google), Jeff Bezos (Amazon), Tim Cook (Apple), Sam Altman (Open AI), Shou Zi Chew (TikTok) and Rupert Murdoch (Fox News).

The American Computer and Communications Industry Association framed Australian policies as 'trade barriers' to US companies in 2025, and suggested the new President should act on them. The Australian Government policies include minimum local media content quotas, regulation of AI, and news media bargaining laws that force platforms to pay for professional news they link to or re-post.

Question (Key concept – Institutions): Analyse the competing contexts of social, political and economic factors influencing institutional practices. **Consider** how Big Tech media enables and constrains participation in different contexts for different purposes. Take into account the impact of global ownership on distribution and loser-generated content.

Evaluate the impact of these media technologies on individuals and groups and the implications for regulation.

7 Writing case studies

CASE STUDIES – FEATURES AND STRUCTURE

A **case study** investigation task is an opportunity to explore how audiences participate with a specific moving-image media 'case', and to examine how institutions and technological characteristics have engaged and sustained audience participation.

A case study is a research method investigating a particular product, question or real-life situation. The term 'case study' refers to both the investigation process and the product of that inquiry. The content and structure of a case study can change depending on the subject area or discipline, but generally it will involve research and analysis of issues involved in the case.

In Film, Television & New Media, this investigation will focus on a moving-image media case, and how technological and institutional factors influence the ways audiences participate and engage with media.

Features of case studies

When writing a case study, it is important to establish a specific 'case' for investigation, have a clear structure and show evidence of analysis and research.

Case choice

A case study should have a case with defined focus and boundaries, and clear research questions. The case should be contemporary and be a phenomenon specific to time and space. The topic of your case choice must be specific enough so that the response can be written within the word limit while still allowing appropriate scope for analysis and evaluation.

If the case choice is too broad and lacks boundaries, it could possibly result in a superficial response if completed within the word limit. That is, the response may only include identification and explanation of production context and features of the case, and therefore limited analysis of features that allow interaction or evaluation of factors relating to audience participation.

Reading the task instructions carefully and seeking clarification if needed is an essential step in all assessment. Check the instrument-specific marking guide (ISMG) to ensure your idea will satisfy requirements. For example, ensure that your chosen case has opportunities for audience interaction. When deciding on a 'case' for investigation, conduct preliminary research to ensure there is enough information available for referencing and making judgements supported with evidence.

Structure and content of case studies

Similar to most academic writing, a case study has an introduction and conclusion, with body paragraphs in between. Consult the task sheet and ISMG, and be careful not to go off on tangents. When structuring the body of your case study, you may wish to use a basic structure of:

- Introduction
- Body
    Possible topics of body paragraphs:
    – Audience and contexts of production
    – Analysis of case features
    – Evaluation of audience participation
- Conclusion.

    Alternatively, the body paragraphs could be split up based on different elements of the case, including analysis and evaluation in each body paragraph.

    It is also important to check when you are expected to identify, describe, analyse and evaluate within your response, backing up your points with appropriate evidence.

Case study introduction

The introduction needs to establish a clear topic or thesis for your case study. Ensure the case choice

is well-defined, and that the opening is written so that readers want to learn more. Briefly set the context for the case by considering who, what, when and where.

Once you have finished writing, it is important that you double-check there is coherence between the introduction and the rest of the investigation, especially if you discovered new points about the topic during the writing process.

Audience and contexts of production

This information will be started in the introduction paragraph, and can be continued in either a short paragraph on its own or included within the body paragraphs about features of the case and factors relating to participation.

Audience

Clearly identifying and describing the audience for the case is necessary to meet initial marks in the criteria, and for the rest of the investigation to be contextualised. Ensure that you are specific about identifying the audience and avoid vague statements such as 'appeals to a wide range of people'. Refer to Chapter 3 for more information about defining the audience. It may be beneficial to back-up the audience identification and explanation with references and consider whether there have been changes in the audience over time. Studio and company websites, behind-the-scenes footage and press releases can be sources of information about intended audiences. How the production is marketed and advertised can also reveal its target audience.

Bloomberg/Getty Images

Figure 7.1 Mark Zuckerberg tries on the Ray-Ban Meta smart glasses during the Meta Connect conference in 2024. One of the ongoing challenges with wearable technology devices is achieving a balance between functionality and aesthetic design. People won't wear it if it is ugly.

Contexts of production: technologies and institutions

Identifying and describing the production context of the case in terms of the relevant technologies and institutions may include (but is not limited to):

- **Location and time period of production.** When and where a production is made can influence many factors, such as available technologies, ratings, settings and costumes, representations and cultural contexts. Locations for filming or post-production services can also depend on budget or the specific needs of production.
- **Creators of the product.** A small emerging company sometimes has the benefit of more creative control over a project compared with a digital game designer or film director working for a larger corporation. A company may also have specific values or mission statements to uphold, or creators may be influenced by their own values.
- **Financing and budgeting.** The source of funding for a project could be commercial, private, **crowdfunded**, government/public funds or a combination of these. Consider possible requirements/limitations based on the source of funding.
- **Government regulations or other institutional restrictions.** Sometimes a company or filmmakers will have to operate under specific restrictions, such as rules around ratings classifications, company charters or licensing specifications for existing **intellectual property**. For example, when creating the Amazon TV Show *Fallout* (2024), which is based on the successful video game franchise of the same name, the main rule from game director Todd Howard was that the new TV series didn't contradict the endings of the existing video games.
- **Product distribution and audience access.** The way products are distributed and the available platform/s for a product can affect audience access and participation. The cost of certain technologies can also be a barrier to participation.
- **Available technologies.** The technology at the time of production can have a significant impact on production and distribution methods, the visual style and the interactive features of a production. Sometimes a product will break new ground in technological developments, such as the **computer-generated imagery** in the animation for *Toy Story* (1995) and the **motion-capture technologies** in *Avatar* (2009).

BFA/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 7.2 *Piece by Piece* (2024) is an innovative biopic about the cultural icon Pharrell Williams, told through LEGO animation. Filmmakers must follow the 'LEGO rule book' when creating LEGO based films, such as designing all the brick constructions so that they are 'buildable' by audiences in real life. The influence was a two-way street, though, with the filmmakers pushing the LEGO company to expand their range of skin tones and hairstyles in the figurines so people of colour could be represented more accurately in the animation.

The explanation of technologies, audiences and institutions relevant to the chosen case often link to points that are expanded upon later in the report when analysing opportunities for interaction and evaluating audience participation.

Analysing features of the case

Digital social networking and new media technologies now make it common for media producers to create multi-platform content to expand their story worlds or provide new levels of participation and interactivity for audiences. Make sure that you go beyond just identifying the interactive features and listing experiences for audiences; remember to analyse these elements. During the research process, determine what opportunities exist for audience interaction for the chosen case and how these work within the contexts of production. Analyse how these features may invite participation and sustain audience engagement.

Interactive features of streaming platforms

Compared to traditional television where audiences had limited options for interaction such as switching channels, streaming platforms offer users more control over their experience. Consider the affordances of the platform/s and what audiences can do in terms of actions – especially if there are interesting options beyond the standard pause/play and show selection. For example, a 'watch party' feature is available on some streaming services where the video playback is synchronised for a group of

subscribers and a group chat feature is added into the experience.

Social media as storytelling

While the popularity of various social media websites/apps can come and go (e.g. MySpace and Bebo), a product having a social media presence is an easy way for it to connect with audiences and provide interactive opportunities. Media producers can expand the story world of a multi-platform product and offer different narrative threads; for example, enabling audiences to 'follow' or message a fictional character's TikTok or Facebook page.

Social media and fandom

Social media provides a way for communities to be built around media content, and audiences can share favourite clips, comment on posts to show support and generally engage in fan culture practices (see page 38). During live broadcasts, some reality shows display social media posts from audience members to further engage viewers.

It is important to determine if the various sites/pages are 'official' and created by the producers of the content, or whether they are produced by audiences. According to Hoodlum's Nathan Mayfield, conversations about media products will happen anyway, and a multi-platform approach from the outset allows creators to have some control or 'ownership' of the conversation. A former FTVNM student, Mayfield is Chief Creative Officer and cofounder of Hoodlum, a Brisbane-based media entertainment company that has gained international recognition for its multi-platform productions.

User generated content

Audiences can be encouraged to create and share content relating to a media product, which can increase audience engagement and promote the product. Consider the type of content, how it's shared and whether audiences created their own content from scratch, or if interactive elements have been provided as part of the production experience. For example, to complement the *Game of Thrones: House of the Dragon* (2022–present) series, HBO partnered with The Mill to release an **augmented reality (AR)** game app where users can raise a unique dragon from an egg, interact with the dragon through their device to help it grow and share the videos of the experience.

Weblink
How animation and documentary filmmakers built Pharrell's musical biopic *Piece By Piece*

Behind-the-scenes, extras and short clips

Behind-the-scenes clips for television shows, webisodes, films and digital games are available online via a product or company's website, posts on social media or links and videos shared between consumers.

When exploring these media elements, consider how these interactive features enrich the audience experience and the levels of interactivity available. This approach is also used for reality television (see page 28), where audiences can re-watch episodes or specific parts of episodes (such as the judging moments or favourite performances), learn more about contestants or view how-to videos for lifestyle shows.

Digital games, VR, MR and AR experiences

This type of media has often been the platform to push existing boundaries of audience interactivity. Technologies such as **virtual reality (VR)** allow for immersive gameplay, which is a new level of physical interactivity. Ensure that the interactive features of the experience are analysed: what affordances are available, and are they obvious, hidden or false? Consider the level of user control within the game/app in terms of what actions are possible, customisation of characters and the experience.

In terms of social interactivity, evolving internet speeds have led to online gaming and **massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPG)**, where gamers can interact with each other within the games. Social media and video streaming services allow gamers to easily connect with each other and share videos showcasing their skills or asking for advice.

Interactive films, shows and episodic narrative games

How a person participates in an interactive narrative product can be affected by whether the interactive story is experienced as a group or individually. It could get annoying very quickly in a cinema setting or group voting situation if your choice is always in the minority, and you don't get to see the film play out as you would like. Having full control of the story would be a benefit of 'playing' the interactive film as a solo experience, made possible through various streaming platforms or episodic narrative games. Consider the 'smoothness' of participating in terms of how the choices are selected, thus influencing the storytelling and audience experience.

Drop Bear Bytes/tinyBuild

Figure 7.3 Set in a post-apocalyptic Australia, the video game *Broken Roads* (2024) features a blend of traditional narrative **role-playing game (RPG)** mechanics and a unique morality system. The Steam distribution platform allows two-way communication between players and game developers, with the creators able to respond to user comments and send updates about the game's development. These comments and game reviews are date and time stamped, along with the number of playing hours for the individual who wrote the review.

Audience voting

Usually a popular option for reality television or competitions, audience voting allows for comparison with judges' decisions and, for some shows, can determine which contestants advance to the next round. More recently, for example, audiences are asked to download a specific app to vote or to download an artist's latest song to count as a vote in singing competitions.

Evaluating audience participation

In the case study investigation, once you have analysed the features that allow participation within your chosen case, you will need to evaluate factors relating to audiences participating in the moving-image product/experience. It is important to support such points with convincing evidence of research, such as statistics or other reports (e.g. news stories) about audience participation and the production. Evaluating factors relating to audience participation may include accessibility, *how* audiences participated in the case, the benefits and/or limitations for audience participation and making judgements or conclusions about the chosen case.

Evaluating audience participation could include factors involving (but not limited to):

- **Barriers to participation.** Audience participation could be hindered by factors such as technological, financial, institutional or social barriers (see pages 10–11). Geoblocking or geolocking is a common complaint for audiences where institutions have restricted access to internet content depending on a user's location. Although part of the 'case' is available in many countries, other interactive elements might be restricted. Glitches in gameplay or apps/ websites/streaming services crashing are common concerns that affect audience enjoyment. The design of interactive elements can be the difference between a successful product and a failure.
- **Enabling participation.** Audience access to media is a key factor in how people can participate. For example, some game studios will make the initial game free to download so individuals can participate, but then may have extra features behind a **paywall**. A benefit of the commonplace use of digital devices in public means there is now more closed captioning

(subtitles) available on videos. This added element increases accessibility to audiences in the deaf community, as well as people who forgot their headphones that day.

- **Degree of audience participation.** For a multi-platform case in particular, the creators may have designed a range of possibilities for audience participation or avenues to expand the story world, but audiences may not actually use/ view all the potential options. Audiences may focus their attention on a particular part of the experience, or their engagement may be more passive than the creators had planned.
- **Changing products due to participation.** Audiences can interact with media in ways that were unanticipated by the creators, which might even result in companies making changes to the products. With the 2016 craze of *Pokémon Go*, there were reports of players trespassing on private property or being involved in road accidents. To combat the issue of road safety, Niantic updated the game so that it was 'unplayable' at higher speeds. This decision wasn't popular with fans who liked to play the game on public transport.
- **Participation influencing representations.** In response to audience feedback or cultural changes, media institutions can modify or revamp representations in products. Representations of characters can be altered as media franchises expand to reflect changing attitudes or revive series. Alternatively, audiences may object to changing representations of existing characters, such as the backlash around

Robert Yang, Department of Transport and Planning, 2025

Figure 7.4 Transport Victoria displayed warnings of 'Don't Drive and Pokemon' on its electronic signs over major highways. Although *Pokémon Go* (2016) was celebrated for getting gamers out of the house and exercising in the fresh air, there were issues regarding player safety.

'Research shows that when you watch VR your brain understands and processes that as memory, as a lived experience. There is much more research to be done to establish the short, medium and long-term impacts of watching this material.'

Courtney Gibson, Screen NSW CEO (2016)

the first trailer for the *Sonic the Hedgehog* (2020) film. Audiences' reactions were brutal, spawning countless jokes and memes across social media. Given this negative reaction, director Jeff Fowler responded to fans via X where he vowed to make changes to Sonic's character before releasing the film.

- **Social benefits of interaction.** Participating with media can lead to audiences creating communities and building relationships to engage with each other as well as the story world. *Overwatch* (2016) is a team-based multiplayer shooter game featuring a diverse group of characters. According to the game developer Jeff Kaplan, *Overwatch* was purposely designed in this way so that audiences feel included and well represented. One of the characters, D.Va, has become a symbol for a group of Korean feminist gamers who are fighting for gender equality.

- **Social activism benefits.** Increased awareness of social issues can be another positive outcome of audience participation with media. Through AR projects such as *The Whole Story* or *The Artvertiser*, audiences can edit their environments without the obvious disadvantages of normal graffiti, says Robert Seddon, philosophy Honorary Fellow at Durham University. VR has been called 'the empathy machine', by tech entrepreneur Chris Milk, for its ability to put a person in someone else's shoes. *Clouds Over Sidra* (2015) is a VR experience developed by the United Nations that follows the story of a young girl living in a refugee camp in Jordan. Early findings by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Action Campaign suggest that VR is twice as effective at raising funds than traditional methods.

- **Limitations of increased access.** Like the 'moral panics' of previous generations, concerns have been raised about young or vulnerable audiences accessing mature content given the

increased access to video-on-demand services, social media and game download services such as Steam. It is not unusual for film or television show releases on Netflix to make news headlines as experts debate their potential effects on viewers.

- **Limitations of immersive participation.** Given the immersive nature of VR and the potential impact on audiences both emotionally and physically, concerns have been raised about when it is ethical and unethical for VR producers to place somebody in certain situations. Watching a news story on a screen with footage of war zones, for example, is not nearly as confronting to audiences as being placed directly in that war zone situation through wearing a VR headset. Marc Fennell,

"*The driving on that game is simulated, but the road rage is real.*"

Figure 7.5 A man rages as he plays a driving game on his phone. The effects of media on audiences have been a concern for as long as media products have existed. Often, these concerns are with the effects of violence or adult themes on audiences.

Cartoonstock.com/Larry Lambert

host of *Download This Show* on ABC Radio National, says that VR developers are starting to come up with their own sets of rules in the absence of clear regulations. The main agreement is that anything that is physically intrusive, such as messing with someone's sense of gravity (potentially making them nauseated) or simulating something happening to a person's body, is unethical and should not be an option.

- **Overall judgements or conclusions.** When evaluating factors relating to audience participation, this will likely include or lead to drawing conclusions about the overall experience for audiences and assessing the value, significance or success of the selected case. Make sure any judgements are backed up with clear evidence, such as references and statistics around audience participation numbers, critical acclaim, financial profit/loss or awards nominations.

Case study conclusion

The conclusion of your case study may include a single summative judgement about the overall success, popularity or importance of the 'case'. Depending on the nature of the case, you might suggest areas for improvement if issues were identified. A summary of the main arguments is standard practice, but this is more effective if the ideas emphasise a final point rather than just reminding the reader of what came before.

Primary and secondary sources

Sources are the products, reference materials or evidence that you use to find out more information about a particular topic. It is expected that your case study follows referencing conventions such as the use of in-text citations and a bibliography.

Both primary and secondary sources are necessary in writing a well-supported case study investigation.

Primary sources

Primary sources are considered the original product/experience being investigated. They can include:

- original productions (such as film, television and online videos)
- digital games

- AR, mixed reality (MR) and VR experiences
- in multi-platform storytelling, the different media elements involved
- pre-production planning (such as storyboards and director's notes)
- evidence of audiences participating in the experience (such as social media content).

Secondary sources

Secondary sources are written/created about or in response to the primary sources. They can include:

- textbooks and books
- research articles and academic journals
- websites and blogs
- news stories (such as articles, radio and video)
- film/television/game reviews
- documentaries
- podcasts or video essays
- social media.

Finding information

Ensure you carefully consider the source of your information, its reliability and how you will use the evidence to support your judgements. Traditional sources of information such as academic journals and books are useful starting points, but occasionally it can be difficult finding information when the chosen case is a recent or current phenomenon at the time of writing.

There are a number of ways you can approach searching online for audience participation data or production information. Secondary sources can often include statistics or comments on the outcome of audiences participating with the 'case'. Institutions such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Screen Australia and Screen Queensland release publications about topics such as audience statistics or contexts of production. News articles and film reviews can also reveal information about audiences interacting with media or critics' reactions.

Depending on your case choice, you can check primary sources for participation data; for instance, the number of views on YouTube or number of downloads on app stores for a product. Some websites and platforms such as Steam show back-to-back bar charts displaying the number of positive and negative reviews over a particular time period.

7.1 ACTIVITIES

1   Choose a selection of the top YouTubers that are labelled 'Creator on the Rise' by YouTube, or another measure of popularity such as the Top 20 most subscribed last year. **Analyse** the types of content they produce. Categorise the YouTubers in groups such as product review videos, vlogs, gaming videos, educational videos or prank videos. **Evaluate** how audiences can interact with the YouTuber and whether there is two-way engagement.

2   **Design** a timeline showing significant events in a recent participatory media phenomenon such as *Pokémon Go* (2016) or the production chosen for your case study. Include additional information about events and key dates, such as product development, release dates and updates, gamer participation events, awards, and 'milestones' and significant changes in terms of number of users.

3   **Identify** an instance of audiences influencing the development of a production through social media participation, such as the negative reaction to the initial trailer for the *Sonic the Hedgehog* (2020) film. **Analyse** how the production was changed in response to the audience's interactions by **comparing** the finished production to the original design.

4   Select an example of MR or VR storytelling. Respond in writing to the areas of investigation in the following table. Present your findings to the class.

DESCRIBE	ANALYSE	EVALUATE
Describe how technical and symbolic codes and conventions are used to tell the story through this platform. **Identify** and **explain** any opportunities for user interaction.	**Analyse** the interactive options available to users and **compare** the user experience of the story to traditional media options such as film and television.	**Evaluate** the strengths and limitations of this method of storytelling. **Draw conclusions** about whether the story was enhanced for audiences through MR/VR technologies.

Case study example 1

Doctor Who: A case study of multi-platform storytelling

by Dr Cameron Cliff

Introduction

Doctor Who is one of the longest-running story worlds in modern history. Lasting over 50 years and based on a television series broadcast in over 50 countries, it is the largest export and third highest merchandise seller of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) (Chapman, 2014, p. 56). This success is linked to a complex strategy of creating many interlinked stories across multiple platforms. This strategy, in turn, is influenced by the BBC's responsibilities as a public institution.

Production and audience context

Doctor Who may have the popularity and size of a Hollywood story world like *Star Wars* or *Star Trek*. However, it is also influenced by the BBC's position as a public institution. The BBC is guided by a set of guidelines known as the BBC Charter. When creating narratives, the BBC must benefit the public with stories that are entertaining, educating and culturally relevant (Department of Culture, 2006). 'Public benefit' refers to showing 'the most creative, high quality and distinctive output' and reflecting 'the United Kingdom, its culture and values to the world' (BBC, 2018). From 2005, the charter also charged the BBC with 'experimenting with new technology' (Department of Culture, 2006).

The chronology of *Doctor Who* shows three distinct periods in *Doctor Who*'s development that reflect the evolution of the BBC as an institution. These are: Classic Who (1962–1989), Hiatus Who (1989–2005) and Contemporary Who (2005–present). Each is influenced by available technology and the BBC's charter at that time.

From 1962 to 1989 (Classic Who), *Doctor Who* was made for a medium that was relatively new: television. It was created to fill a programming gap on Saturday afternoons between sports programming and talk shows (Chapman, 2014 p. 46). The BBC also developed books, comics and movies that followed popular characters, such as the Daleks (BBC, 1966). However, these often contradicted the central narrative of the television series or were retellings of the television series. They did not represent true immersive extensions of the *Doctor Who* world (Perryman, 2008).

Weblink
Transmedia Storytelling Strategy: *Doctor Who chronology*

During the second period of *Doctor Who*'s history (1989–2005), the central television series was taken off air due to decreasing popularity with British audiences. However, new *Doctor Who* content was still released every month (Yarbrough, 2015). The BBC was able to produce books, comics, a movie and an animated show as it experimented with the narrative future of the show and ongoing merchandising (Jones, 2013).

The success of different extensions and the emerging internet marketplace led to a return of the television series in 2005. This reboot was underscored by a significant change in the BBC's institutional strategy.

Doctor Who returned to television screens with a strategy to extend the world across multiple platforms (Yarbrough, 2015). Since its reboot, *Doctor Who* has included websites, blogs, animated videos, books, comics and interactive television programming. Each platform introduces the new world of *Doctor Who* and expands the central narrative by adding characters, back stories or methods of interaction.

'How and where we can watch comedy, drama and entertainment has undergone a revolution. The programmes themselves have not. What's needed now is a creative revolution every bit as ambitious as the technical one we've seen.'

Jana Bennett, Director of BBC Television (2004) in Perryman, 2008.

Analysis of case features

The reboot of *Doctor Who* introduced new layers of interaction for contemporary audiences. When each layer of audience interaction in *Doctor Who* is examined and considered, it reveals a complex structure of interactive features aimed at sustaining audience engagement across different levels of involvement.

For those just casually interested in *Doctor Who,* there is a layer of passive interactive points. These include the main television series, as well as two spin-offs for different age groups (*Torchwood* [2006–11] and *The Sarah Jane Chronicles* [2007–11]). It also includes an extra layer of immersion through books, comics and audio dramas to sustain audience interest. Within this passive layer, the BBC has also fulfilled their charter obligations by experimenting with new methods of initiating participation from their fans. Since 2005, it has been using connected television technology to provide documentary content and behind-the-scenes commentary on episodes. For example, before the launch of the episode 'Rose' in 2005, hundreds of thousands of people used this technology to view a web documentary called *The Doctor Who Years* (Core, 2015).

For those interested in a more active participation with the world of *Doctor Who*, the BBC also experimented with additional interactive content to sustain audience interest. Websites authored by fictional characters within *Doctor Who* have continued since the series' relaunch, providing immersive clues based on the show. Similarly, the BBC has even created 'real-world' narratives for the audience to interact with. *The Doctor Who Experience* was a unique story to which audiences could buy tickets when they visited what was a museum for *Doctor Who* props and sets. It gave hardcore fans an experience that was part-theme park ride and part-theatre show so they could fully immerse themselves in the story.

This experimentation has had some limited audience engagement. *Doctor Who* has continually failed to launch a successful spin-off game franchise. While some games such as *The Doctor Who Adventures* (2010) have been well received, not all attempts at a high-budget game have succeeded. Most notably, *Doctor Who: The Eternity Clock* (2012) was critiqued as such a poor game that planned sequels for the game were scrapped almost immediately after its release (Reynolds & Nichols, 2013).

Evaluation of audience participation

The BBC as a public institution has created a sustained social and cultural impact with *Doctor Who*. These include the BBC's institutional obligations, the BBC's embrace of fans and the place of *Doctor Who* fans within the BBC.

Due to its institutional obligations, the BBC has increased the worth of *Doctor Who* beyond a traditional entertainment franchise, developing educational content such as coding apps and live shows in schools. Thousands of British schoolchildren learn to read with *Doctor Who* characters in *Doctor Who* learn-to-read apps. The app *The Doctor and the Dalek* (2014–2019) was downloaded by over 100 000 Android users alone (Google, n.d.) and came with classroom exercises and a full curriculum for teachers. This benefitted the engagement with the series by exploring characters and themes in everyday life.

An embrace of fans and fan culture also benefitted the television show during the Hiatus period. The United States had only just come into contact with *Doctor Who* during the 1990s but many crucial episodes of the show had been lost. Hardcore fans, who had been recording and remixing episodes on VCR, scavenged television and radio episodes to provide missing content to the BBC (Jones, 2013). This led to a booming international audience that has continued to grow until the present day. Gallifrey One is one of the largest fan conventions in the world, with over 3200 paying members attending the Los Angeles convention in 2017 alone (FanCons, 2017).

Prior to the relaunch of *Doctor Who* in 2005, the BBC focused on demonstrating the worth of *Doctor Who* to existing fans. It provided documentaries, websites and historical content online and on television. This benefitted engagement with the audience as it leveraged the nostalgia of older fans and brought a wave of new recruits through word of mouth (Chapman, 2014). As a result, more than 10 million viewers tuned in within Britain alone to watch the first episode of the new series (Sullivan, 2009).

The influential status of *Doctor Who* fan culture in Britain has become a cycle of development. Early fans of *Doctor Who* are now the ones creating the modern multi-platform version of the show. During the Hiatus period, the BBC supplemented low book budgets by publishing the best of fan books. One fan author, a young Russell T Davies, became a successful creative embedded within the BBC. Subsequently, Davies and a group of *Doctor Who* fans were promoted to top positions at the BBC. They were responsible for returning *Doctor Who* to its heights of success in the contemporary era (Davies & Cook, 2010).

Conclusion

Doctor Who became a significant and successful multi-platform franchise due to an embrace of fan culture and the BBC's position as a public institution. Cross-platform interaction sustained *Doctor Who* during the Hiatus years and created a platform for success as the modern version launched in 2005. Through its multi-platform strategy, the BBC brings different levels of engagement to its audience today. Modern *Doctor Who* goes beyond a successful television series, helping the BBC to fulfil its obligations as a public institution as a popular franchise, and its adherence to the BBC's charter has resulted in significant social impact, including educational, social, cultural and entertainment outcomes.

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Case study example 2
Bluey: A case study of multi-platform storytelling
by Kelsey Hall

Introduction

Multi-platform storytelling has opened up a range of possibilities for audience engagement, particularly through the encouragement of sustained participation and the expansion of story worlds. The children's television show *Bluey* (2018–present) created by Ludo Studios for the ABC continually builds the engagement of children and families by using multi-platform releases and transmedia storytelling.

Bluey follows a small family of animated blue heeler cattle dogs, Bandit, Chilli, Bingo and Bluey, as they navigate family life. The show has an emphasis on encouraging positive mindsets and imparting life lessons for children (and parents) at the end of each episode. The context of the Brisbane location allows *Bluey* to build an Australian identity while also including their US and UK fanbase through unique storytelling. The effective design of this multi-platform project is achieved through the use of various platforms such as television, online websites, phone applications and social media, resulting in high audience engagement.

Weblink
Welcome to the home of *Bluey*: Bluey TV

Production and audience context

Bluey began as a 20-minute Brisbane-based animated series targeting preschool children; however, after almost instant success, it began to expand its reach to other forms of media in order to initiate participation. *Bluey* was released on the ABC in 2018 and was quickly followed by the COVID-19 pandemic. This greatly impacted the context of production for season two, but also provided new opportunities for the ABC with not only the narrative itself but the method of distribution. *Bluey* could narratively explore issues that mattered to Australian families while audiences remained in lockdown, which changed the reception of the series.

While the show initially targeted children in season one, the lockdown allowed *Bluey* to appeal to parents who were locked inside watching it with their children. Their adult audience could relate to the parenting styles of Chilli and Bandit, and learn strategies for talking with their kids. The production of *Bluey* was also influenced by the ABC's role as a public institution, which means there are specific requirements for programs according to the ABC charter (ABC, 2024).

Australians rarely see their family life portrayed through animation and *Bluey* effectively communicates some of the Brisbane lifestyle and family values. The ABC could explore the method of distribution, knowing that the pandemic increased audience use of on-demand content and expanded to streaming services like Disney+. Anna Potter (2021, p. 227) describes how *Bluey* 'can offer children's television in unlimited quantities and on-demand on iView, on two linear services, and via branded apps', which is only enhancing the ABC's model of a two-hour block of children's programming scheduled for after school each day, which was implemented in the 1990s.

By releasing *Bluey* through on-demand and streaming, this expanded the series to the international market and embraced the growing binge culture at the time. The on-demand model allows the ABC to consider alternate pathways of distribution to better engage the younger digital audience while still embracing its Brisbane-based roots.

Analysis of case features

As Baumann and Hasepusch (2016, p. 89) state, 'platforms such as laptops, tablets, smart phones, game consoles and similar devices provide additional consumption options besides traditional TV sets', allowing audiences to move away from traditional mediums to explore new forms of engagement and participation. *Bluey* may have started as a simple children's show, but according to the official Facebook page, '#Bluey is the most watched show on US streaming this year; with over 35 billion minutes watched!' (2024). By expanding its reach to alternative platforms, *Bluey* can provide opportunities for audience interaction.

As the series continued and online engagement proved to be paramount in their success, *Bluey* created an official Bluey.tv website to initiate further participation from fans. The Bluey.tv website benefits the series and engages their audiences with a 'grown ups' and a 'merchandise' page containing the *Bluey* shop and access to subscribe to a weekly newsletter with *Bluey* news. The website allows children to continue to engage with the show with snippets of the television episodes, explanation of the content covered, talking points and crafting activities to complete with parental guidance. Bluey.tv also contains a blog section with updated news and events to do with *Bluey* for both parents and kids to read and comment to sustain audience engagement over time.

Over the course of only a few years, *Bluey* has continued to expand by creating an official X page and a dancing *Bluey* Facebook filter during the context of the pandemic. This became an important part of production for *Bluey* at the time as the show's release of season two was marred by the global pandemic. The use of the Facebook filter with a dancing Bluey allows audiences to create their own augmented reality (AR) content and spread fan culture by sharing their own video online. José Alberto García-Avilés describes how social media can be used to provide 'instant feedback to television executives about the level of acceptance of the programs as they are broadcast, also becoming a thermometer to measure the level of audience engagement' (García-Avilés, 2012, p. 437). Ludo Studios tries to sustain fan engagement in the show by promoting various media campaigns on social media.

Bluey has also created an official interactive application released for mobile devices. The Bluey: Let's Play application allows fans to interact and explore the *Bluey* universe by moving characters and objects in Bluey's Brisbane home. Younger audiences could also tap to create meals and play famous games from the series. This app rewards audiences for participating with additional dialogue from the characters and a points-based system to track their achievements. The app had some limitations due to the basic design and gamified features that only allow audiences to click on some elements within the frame and doesn't use any further forms of interaction for audiences.

The *Bluey* franchise has also begun to seep into the real world. In 2022, a physical Airbnb house in the Brisbane suburbs was built where fans could visit a replica of Bluey's home for photos or to stay for the night. This in itself is a phenomenon, as the fictional world has transcended into the real world, essentially making *Bluey* characters real in the minds of their fans. Furthermore, in 2024 *Bluey* received its own limited edition $1 dollar coin. Finally, the *Bluey* franchise has Bluey World in Brisbane, where families can visit the homes and play interactive games in person (Bluey's World, 2024). The *Bluey* series has created a detailed multi-platform world where each new medium adds upon the original series and builds the story world in order to sustain audience engagement.

Evaluation of audience participation

The impact of *Bluey*'s multi-platform design is immense. There are traces of Australianisms and ways of looking at the world that are infusing other cultures following the show's release in the US and UK. *Bluey* shows the world representations of Australian life with episodes that explore our wildlife, Brisbane city landscapes and tackling Australian topics like spiders and playing cricket. The Bluey.tv website encourages imaginative play with audiences, further benefitting their level of engagement with the series.

Bluey and her family have gradually become Australian icons for a healthy and happy family dynamic, with episodes that explore their relationships and emotions. Because of their younger audience, the game designs are often limited in their functions, but instead focus on the message of the show. The series explores messages for not only children, but adults too, with Chilli and Bandit acting as the perfect representation of the imperfect parent. As Giuffre states, 'in addition to watching the show itself, young viewers were also encouraged to continue to participate with the show's characters and activities as extended forms of play, with entertainment, rather than education or awareness, a primary concern' (2021, p. 68).

The series focuses on participation for their younger audiences but acknowledges the co-watching nature of the series and taps into the parents as viewers and fans to educate them on their own understanding of what it means to be a good parent. The series often explores messages that are intended for parents, such as dealing with trauma, expressing healthy emotions and healing their own childhood wounds.

By engaging with audiences through several platforms, *Bluey* can remain competitive to this new form of storytelling and audience interaction and stay relevant in an ever-changing climate. The series focuses on the engagement and participation of all fans, and creates impact through its focus on representing a Brisbane Australian family and reflecting life growing up in an Australian city.

Conclusion

Bluey has become an international sensation by encouraging audience participation and active engagement through multi-platform releases in various elements the series explores. The show clearly comes from a desire to entertain children while simultaneously reflecting the family values of many Australians. The choice by Ludo Studios to set *Bluey* in Brisbane Australia has become central to its appeal worldwide. By engaging in social media, online websites, apps and fan-made content, *Bluey* has created a multi-platform phenomenon that encourages their fans to remain actively engaged in various media that build the *Bluey* story world and allow for audience creation and expansion.

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8 Designing for multi-platform

MULTI-PLATFORM STORYTELLING

Multi-platform storytelling is the technique of delivering a story, or stories, from within the same story world. This is done in a planned way across a range of media platforms. According to media academic Henry Jenkins, multi-platform storytelling is a process whereby 'integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels'. Jenkins argues that the purpose for this is to 'create a unified contribution to the unfolding of the story'.

Interactive multi-platform content makers may not be able to impose a sequential audience experience. Unlike levels in a game or scenes in a film, episodes may not always be seen in order. An audience may explore all content on one platform before moving to another. They may enter the narrative at an unintended entry point and then seek the backstory of a character they identify with.

Table 8.1 Multi-platform storytelling around *Tron Legacy* (2010) – separate but connected story worlds are created on different media.

MEDIA USED	ACTIVITY
Video games	*Tron: Evolution* was released before the film. The game world is a backstory of the film narrative.
Websites	Players were encouraged to search for the character Kevin Flynn, believed to be still alive, using websites that contained codes and clues.
X (previously Twitter)	An X (Twitter) account was opened during Comic-Con (a conference for fans of comics).
Live events	In London, a light-cycle motorcycle was set up, and fans could have their own photographs taken in front of 'Flynn's Arcade'.
Mobiles and tablets	Three mobile applications were set up to explore more of the *Tron* story world.
Social media	A Facebook page was established and a Facebook game was created.

Barry King/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 8.1 An advertisement for the rebooted *Mean Girls* (2024) film, which references the original *Mean Girls* (2004) movie on its 20th anniversary. The multi-platform strategy involved elements such as cast-led videos, classic clips from the 2004 film, Easter Eggs and a dedicated Instagram page from the character Mrs George. Audiences were also encouraged to participate by uploading videos on TikTok using a song released as part of the film's social media strategy.

Multi-platform media storytelling spreads the plots, characters and settings of story worlds across several media platforms. A more immersive entertainment experience is created for audiences when the story is expanded by multi-platform access. Each platform should complement the other when taken together.

To account for interactivity, multi-platform must allow each episodic unit to function with an independent meaning. These could plug into the narrative at various points of connection, or be part of a linear progression, depending on the proposed platform and technology. Especially with short productions of under five minutes, it may be that an entire production becomes a flashback within a larger story world. To include a flashback scene *within* an episode may end up referring to an event that has not yet 'happened' if audiences deviate from the assumed viewing sequence.

This is quite different from a straightforward copy of one media type to another. For example, a movie that is also shown on television is not usually considered to be a multi-platform story. However,

a movie that is converted into a video game and gives characters their own social media accounts *is* multi-platform.

Multi-platform stories come about in two ways, or through some combination of them:

1 **A story is so popular and so important in popular culture that it automatically generates lots of different versions of itself.** These might be sequels, prequels, fan homages or various adaptations. The *Doctor Who* series, *Harry Potter* series, *Star Wars* franchise and *The Lord of the Rings* series are examples of this kind of development.
2 **A story is planned as a multi-platform product right from the beginning.** The **story world** is a very commercial franchise. The aim is to get the audience to consume the product on as many different platforms as possible.

The *Star Wars* multi-platform narrative is an example of an immersive entertainment experience for the audience. Originally, the creators of

Star Wars simply retold the story from the film when they presented it on other platforms, such as via video games. Writer and director George Lucas approved additions to his story world before selling to Disney. The additional platforms had to reveal something new or expand on the *Star Wars* universe.

Four necessary characteristics of good multi-platform media have been identified:

1 **Multiple media.** The special features of each media form should be used to tell the stories.
2 **Different platforms without overlap.** Multi-platform media stories should be connected but not exactly the same on each media form. Sequels and prequels are a good way of keeping the stories distinct.
3 **Common themes.** The different media should have different stories that are based around alternative perspectives of the same theme.
4 **Audience involvement.** Part of the responsibility for the story should lie with the audience, giving a greater feeling of participation.
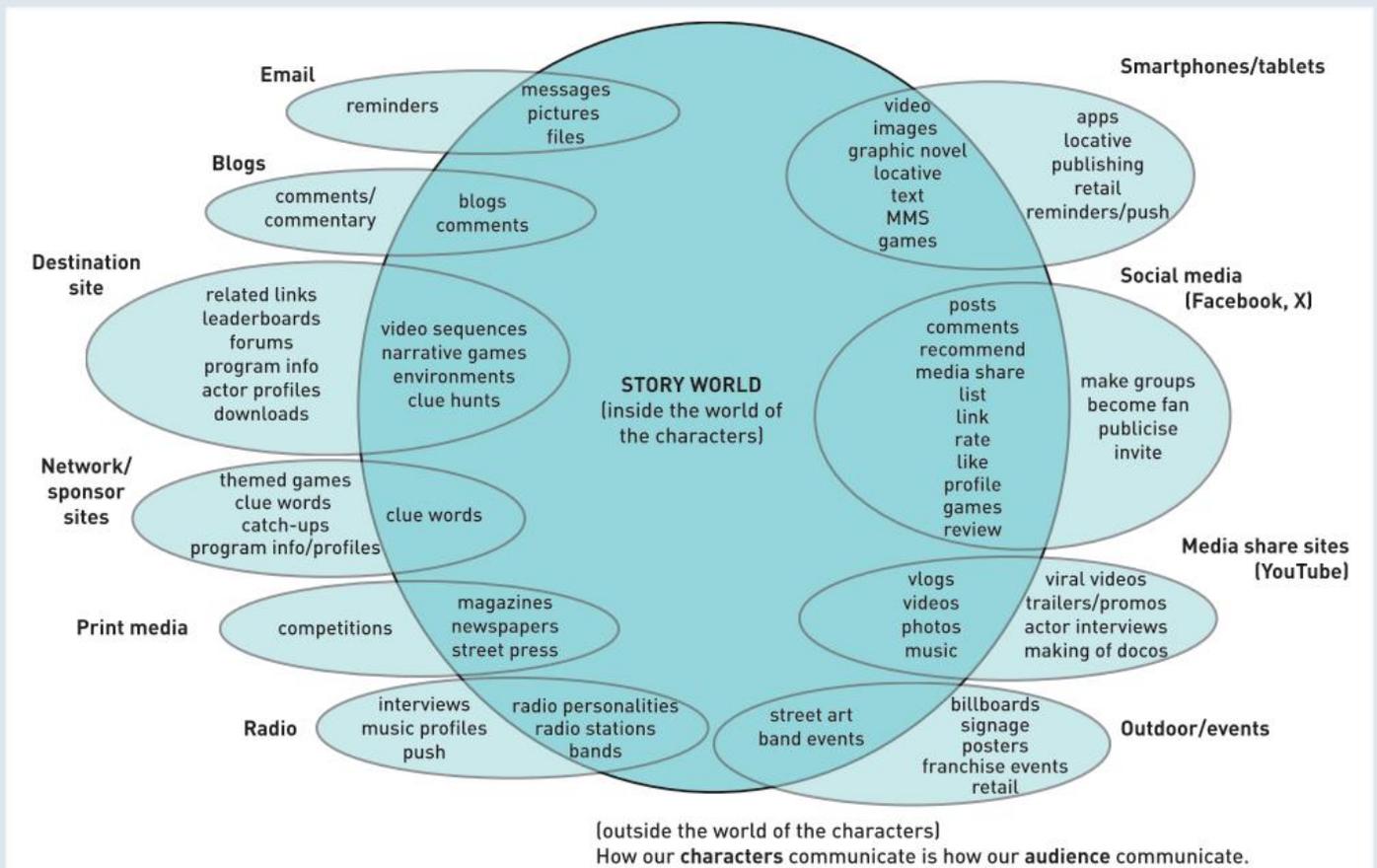
Figure 8.2 A graphic representation of multi-platform media prepared by world-leading company, Hoodlum. The Brisbane-based company created the multi-platform strategy for the television program *Lost* (2004–2010). Hoodlum's Nathan Mayfield states that the aim is to provide a constant narrative thread through all multi-platform touchpoints.

Courtesy Hoodlum Entertainment

'The best multi-platform experiences are when the broadcaster, producer and brand are thinking multi-platform from the outset… All experiences of the story are complementary and refer back to each other.'

Nathan Mayfield, Hoodlum (multi-platform production company)

The concept of multi-platform media entertainment experiences was first proposed by film scholar Marsha Kinder in 1991. She had watched her sons viewing *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* (1987–96) on television, buying the merchandise and then playing games as 'the turtles'. She proposed the idea of multi-platform media as a 'super-system of entertainment' that would:

- cut across modes of production
- appeal to different generations and cultures
- become 'collectible'
- become a media event in itself, accelerating the publicity around itself.

Features of multi-platform media

Those who work in multi-platform media storytelling suggest that it has many of the following features: compelling stories, a story world, distinct media, multi-platform characters, real life artefacts and events, and consideration of the audience.

Compelling stories

Multi-platform media stories follow the same general pattern of all narratives – a chain of events unfolding over time. The difference is that the stories are fragmented. Events may occur on one media platform
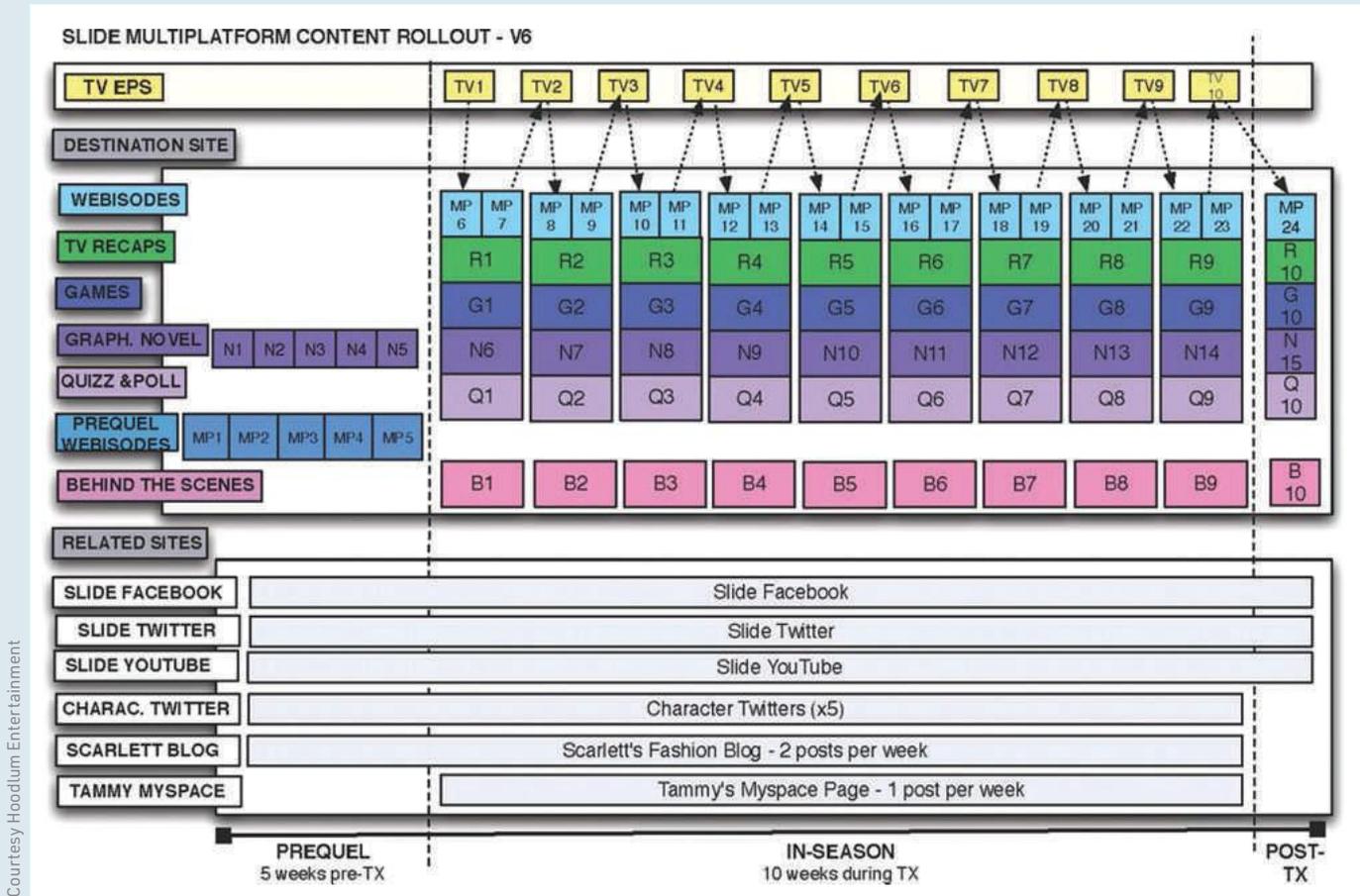
Courtesy Hoodlum Entertainment

Figure 8.3 *SLiDE* multi-platform content plan. Fans could choose their own story 'journey' depending on what combination of media platforms they used.

that do not occur in the others. Each story or story part needs to be satisfying in its own right.

If stories are distributed across many different media forms, then the audience has many different points of entry. Different fragments should direct audiences towards connected episodes or platforms – the next stage of intended engagement.

Story world

The story world is like a hub from which many different possibilities can extend. It provides the base that stories extend from.

A story world is a shared universe with a setting, characters, events and actions that form part of a larger narrative. The story world is often fictional, but can sometimes be a non-fiction world.

Creating multi-platform media productions requires the establishment of a fictional world or universe that is large enough to encompass all of the media platforms. As with soap operas and other long-running television series, multi-platform writers often create a show bible (*Nelson Film, Television and New Media, QCE Units 1 & 2*, Chapter 16), listing characters, their backstories and their personal motivations.

Extensions to stories can be events not present in the main narrative. This can be backstory details– sometimes referred to as a prequel.

Multi-platform characters

These are characters whose journeys unfold across multiple media platforms. Multi-platform media

Courtesy Hoodlum Entertainment

Figure 8.4 *SLiDE* (2011–12) was a multi-platform program developed by Hoodlum Entertainment for Fox TV in Australia and TeenNick channel in the United States. *SLiDE* focused on the lives of five Brisbane teenagers, told across television, **webisodes**, social media and through mobile phone apps. An online graphic novel was also produced. Audience involvement included games, quizzes and real-world events, such as street art. The show also gave local music bands airtime.

Album/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 8.5 *Kaleidoscope* (2023) was a multi-platform program on Netflix. The anthology television series contained eight episodes that would appear in a shuffled order depending on the interaction of the audience. The eight episodes focused on a heist and required audiences to interact with elements of the series in order to produce a particular sequence. This allowed audiences to reflect on which episode order they received and consider how this impacted their enjoyment of the series.

productions provide a lot of extra scope to develop characters. Different media can be used to reveal particular aspects of a character or portray an individual adventure.

Distinct media

Distinct media exists when the media platforms each give a different experience to the user. Different media have different characteristics and will therefore suit different parts of the story. These different characteristics are called **affordances** (see Chapter 4, page 47).

- **Strengths and weaknesses.** Each medium has its own affordances and its own pros and cons. The multi-platform media plan should consider these and use them to advantage. For instance,
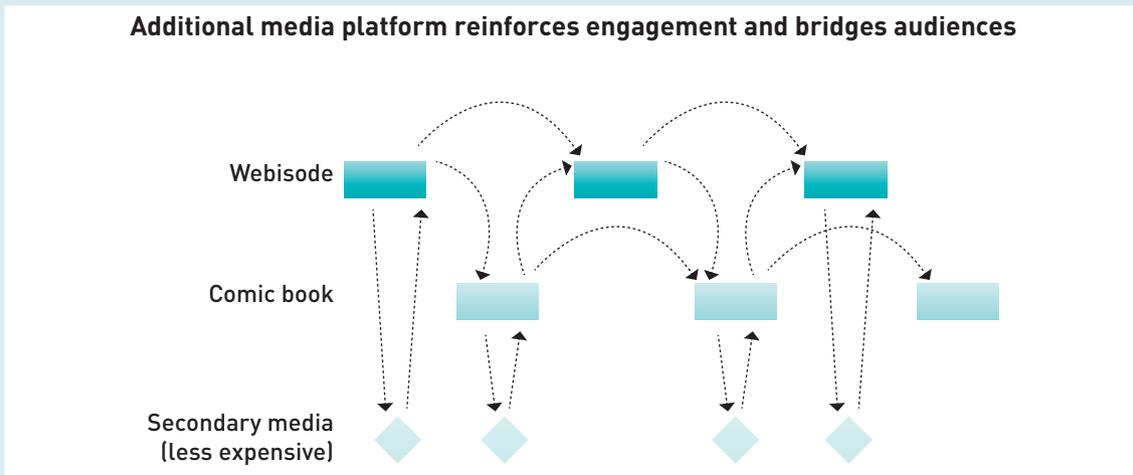
Additional media platform reinforces engagement and bridges audiences

Figure 8.6 Multi-platform media consultant Robert Pratten's diagram of narrative flow across distinct and different media platforms. Pieces of story are distributed across each platform, yet each makes sense on its own.

TikTok is good for short videos, but gamers may prefer Discord.

- **Support weaknesses.** If there is a weakness in one medium, the multi-platform media plan should support this with the strength of another. For example, Instagram might feature curated visuals, but extended dialogue may better suit YouTube.
- **Time the releases.** Using distinct media, it is possible to time events on different platforms so that there is a sequence of activity. This generates audience excitement and sometimes publicity.

Real life experiences

Not everything in the multi-platform narrative has to be placed in the digital media world. Sometimes, extra interest can be generated by using real-life experiences as activated events. Two kinds of real-life experience are popular with multi-platform media producers:

- **Artefacts.** Physical artefacts or objects are often used to generate extra interest. These could

be mail-outs to fans, hidden clues to games or products used by characters. Another type of artefact is specially minted medallions or coins, such as *Bluey* Dollarbucks in 2024.
- **Real-life events.** Competitions, gala events or concerts incorporated into the narrative can be a way to encourage physical fan involvement.

Audience considerations

It is important for multi-platform media producers to consider their audience. The following demographic factors should always be considered:

- age and gender
- occupation and income
- cultural factors and social groups
- media patterns of consumption – legacy media or preferred platforms
- general consumption habits and brand loyalty

Knowing the audience is important because it can suggest where to place pieces of the story and what kinds of characters will appeal.

'World build is all about efficiently conveying information about the time, place and mood of your story. In multi-platform media storytelling, though, the most effective tool is actually to create a small piece of your world and give it to your audience to play with.

Andrea Phillips, freelance multi-platform media writer

8.1 ACTIVITIES

1   **Design** a multi-platform media storytelling graphic like the one in Figure 8.6 for a multi-platform media narrative that you have been engaged with or have heard about. **Explain** in a summary the aspects of the narrative that were distributed across each media form. **Clarify** the technological advantages (or affordances) of each platform that suited a particular aspect of the story. **Give examples** of how this might work.

2   Select a classic story and create a multi-platform media narrative treatment. For example, *Pride and Prejudice* has been cleverly modernised as the Emmy award-winning multi-platform media narrative based around the YouTube vlog *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* (2012–13). **Construct** a list of real-world artefacts and events that could add to the experience for the audience. **Explain** how these would add to the experience of the story world.

3   Select three mediums/media forms that have complementary strengths and weaknesses or affordances. **Explain** what these affordances are for each platform. **Analyse** how affordances, strengths and weaknesses can be used to advantage in a particular story or story type.

PRE-PRODUCTION FOR MULTI-PLATFORM PROJECTS

Multi-platform projects need to be designed to sit across two moving-image media platforms. These need to be connected and provide for audience participation. The story can be told through a variety of media types, such as documentary, animation, film (short or feature length), fictional or reality television, web-based video, gaming cut scenes or interactive experiences. Task sheets will specify maximum lengths, expectations and conditions such as the minimum percentage of original student creation. You may be permitted to include externally sourced file footage or similar, up to a certain fraction. While AI-generated content in final productions is generally considered inappropriate, it may be that up to 30 per cent of non-student created input could be acceptable. Externally sourced content should only 'elevate' the standard, not form the core of the work.

Planning the project

Ensure the selection of different platforms is purposeful and will enhance the storytelling and participatory experience. Be careful that multi-platform concepts don't simply become a 'tour' of social media platforms. You will need to explain the connection between the chosen platforms and *how* the audience will participate with the story via these platforms.

Moving-image media platform options could include (but are not limited to):

- cinema and broadcast television
- television websites/apps with 'catch-up' and video-on-demand (VOD) services
- pay TV and subscription streaming services (e.g. Stan)
- websites and apps
- social media and networking websites/apps
- video-sharing websites/apps (e.g. YouTube)
- live streaming websites/apps (e.g. Discord)
- games and interactive experiences – console, PC and mobile
- augmented reality (AR), mixed reality (MR), virtual reality (VR)
- video advertising platforms in real-world spaces (such as video billboards).

Fictional websites and fan culture events can be considered for participation. If the sequence of experience is significant, a timeline of planned events and '**drop**' dates is helpful.

Multi-platform treatments

A treatment for a multi-platform project will describe the usual elements of story development, characters, visual style, representations, target audience and how mood will be created (*Nelson Film, Television & New Media, QCE Units 1 & 2*, Chapter 16). Further explanation includes justifying the intended use of technical and symbolic codes to create meaning and 'position' audiences. For a multi-platform content task, the treatment will also cover how the story is told across the chosen platforms, and how audiences can participate in and stay engaged with the story.

Technical codes and conventions include cinematography, editing, special effects and sound.

They are called 'technical' as they refer to the technologies and equipment used to construct media products (*Nelson Film, Television and New*

A. F. Archive/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 8.7 *Mr. Robot* (2015–19), a cyber-thriller television series, follows a computer engineer (Rami Malek) in New York City by day who is a vigilante hacker by night. This show uses the technical code of lower-quadrant framing to reinforce inner turmoil and depression.

Media, QCE Units 1 & 2, Chapter 4). In a multi-platform treatment, key technical choices made to tell the story and create meaning for audiences need to be explained and justified, including how the audience can participate in the story across platforms.

Signified meanings of important elements should be described. These can include setting, props, motifs, lighting, colour, costume and framing.

Symbolic codes and *mise en scène* are the elements within the frame that can communicate meaning to audiences (*Nelson Film, Television and New Media, QCE Units 1 & 2*, Chapter 4). This can evoke emotions, communicate themes and create symbolism for character representations. Often, the effect is subtle and audiences may not be consciously aware of how this is being achieved.

Everett Collection Inc./Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 8.8 Bob Parr, aka Mr Incredible, denies an insurance claim of a customer in *The Incredibles* (2004). The bland colours in the office space combined with lighting show the worker's boredom. Bob looks uncomfortable squeezed into business attire. Technical and symbolic codes reinforce his misery as he longs for the superhero days.

8.2 ACTIVITIES

1 To help plan your proposed multi-platform project, **design** character images and outlines (see *Nelson Film, Television & New Media, QCE Units 1 & 2*, Chapter 16) to clarify the details of the main characters. Summarise five key *mise en scène* elements that contribute to the representation of the characters.

2 **Construct** a list of objects and costumes required for the full *mise en scène* of a shot. Select a typical setting from one of the narrative genres (see *Nelson Film, Television & New Media, QCE Units 1 & 2*, Chapter 13).

3 **Resolve** an animatic by scanning the images of a draft storyboard and using an editing program. Add music and dialogue where appropriate and adjust the duration of each shot to match the intended production. **Determine** whether your technical and symbolic code choices are effective, or whether changes are required to improve the clarity of the storytelling.

9 Making multi-platform productions

SHOOTING TECHNIQUES FOR MULTI-PLATFORM PRODUCTIONS

The role of journalists in the 21st century has been transformed by multi-platform access. Journalists are called on to write stories for different platforms, record pieces to camera and often edit it themselves, or shoot drone footage. The work may be uploaded remotely to producers or posted directly online. Likewise, 'creatives' can multitask and make use of direct distribution to platforms. Technology has enabled individuals and small producers to achieve significant production quality and audience size.

However, 21st century equipment also facilitates group behaviour. The term 'collective intelligence' was used by Pierre Levy to discuss how the connectivity of the internet enables a new kind of collaboration. The digital era particularly suits a cooperative crowd approach for audiences and media makers.

Types of multi-platform productions

For assignment purposes, only one platform needs to become a resolved production. This may take different forms that fit the definition of moving image media products and constitute content for a multi-platform production.

Short-form episodes

When choosing an episode or platform to take into production, you should consider whether the idea can be delivered as a quality, resolved production. Even though the media text might sit within a proposed story world, the audience must also understand the stand-alone production. The accessibility of this part of the narrative as a possible entry point is also a consideration.

Gristmill/Australian Children's Television Foundation

Figure 9.1 *Little Lunch* (2015–16) is an Australian mockumentary-style television show that follows the everyday lunchtime dramas of six primary school students and their teacher, Mrs Gonsha. The story of the first episode is about Rory being sent to the principal's office for biting, but this episode could easily have been switched with any other episode in the first season. Episodes that make sense out-of-sequence increase flexibility in multi-platform productions.

Special effects sequences

If a production contains a signature special effect, creators may refine the effect for attention-grabbing promotional purposes. Digital effects can be stored as presets and re-used with various actors' footage in multiple platform episodes. Signature effects can also be used as transition points between episodes or platforms. This can be worked into the story world.

Digital game elements

For digital games, a cut scene is the most appropriate multi-platform content in the context of an assessment task for FTVNM. Game play is generally not suitable. Cut scenes, or **in-game cinematics**, should build from a **trigger event**

K. Agnew

Follow strange sounds into the bush | Run back into the house

Figure 9.2 A simulated shot for an interactive film, shown from a first-person point of view. In student productions, a strategic combination of live-action filming and post-production special effects can simulate an interactive film or VR experience showing a 'walkthrough' of one possible story path.

within the game and contribute to moving the narrative forward despite providing a break in play. Dialogue can be included but not dominate the imagery. Game knowledge, tools or **mechanics** can be explained.

Augmented reality (AR), mixed reality (MR) and virtual reality (VR) products

Like digital games, the multi-platform elements for AR, MR and VR products may be interactive. In a school setting, traditional technologies could be used to simulate the emerging technologies for an AR or VR pilot production. For example, a combination of strategic point-of-view (POV) filming and post-production special effects could simulate a walkthrough for a VR experience.

Interactive films/episodes

Productions with interactive 'choose you own adventure' style storytelling are becoming more popular as platforms such as Netflix include more interactive features (see Chapter 4, page 53). Similar to VR productions, this product could be simulated in a student project by creating one 'strand' of the story experience and using post-production technologies to simulate the selection of choice points along the way.

Shot composition and framing

For the production in the multi-platform project, there needs to be thoughtful planning around the

visual information to be conveyed to an audience, the mood created by framing decisions and how the composition of the shot works in conjunction with the *mise en scène*, character action and possible camera movement within a shot. Given that the multi-platform project is a summative piece of assessment, it is recommended that you plan the sequences of shots to be filmed or animated before starting production to ensure that your production is of a high standard.

Conventional framing

Audiences are used to shots looking a certain way, and if certain expectations are not met, the result can seem amateurish. These convention techniques are guidelines; it is important to know when to use them and when to break the 'rules' to achieve a certain effect:

- **Shot types and angles.** It is usual to have a variety of shot types to create meaning and direct attention in a sequence. This is a fundamental element in shot composition that needs to be planned out in sequence before filming or animation.
- **Rule of thirds.** This framing technique is useful in creating a professional image and is a conventional way to frame shots (see *Nelson Film, Television & New Media, QCE Units 1 & 2*, Chapter 4).

Xiu bao/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 9.3 The comedy *Free Guy* (2021) explores the business world of creating games. Easter eggs, intertextual references and tools from many games dominate the special effects depiction of the in-game-world interactivity. The movie won the 'Best Viral Campaign for a Feature Film' for its promotion on new media platforms.
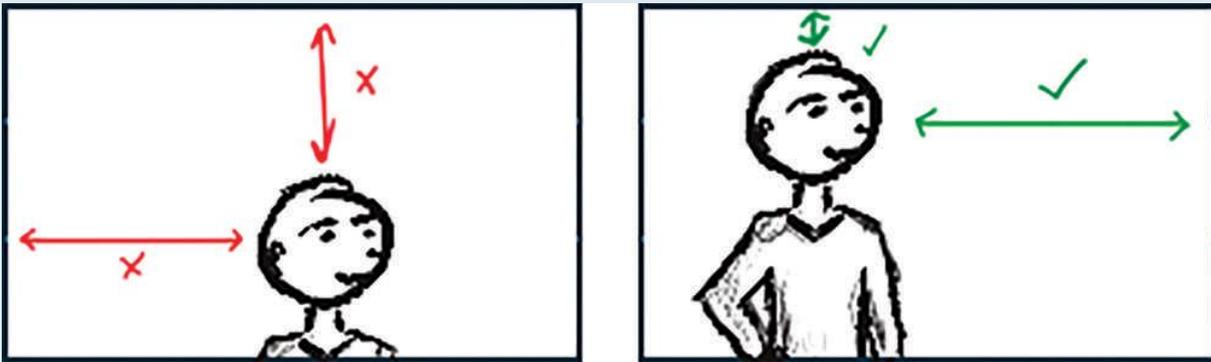
Figure 9.4 The sketch on the left shows too much head room and not enough look room for conventional framing techniques. This sketch on the right is an example of appropriate head room and look room for a standard shot.

- **Look/lead room.** This refers to the space in front of a character in the direction they are looking or walking. **Look/lead room** is important when cutting between two characters having a conversation and making sure that their eye-lines match. If the space is behind a character, audiences are generally conditioned to expect something to happen in that space and this can create tension, such as 'jump-scares' in the horror/thriller genres.
- **Head room.** Appropriate **head room** means there's a small amount of space above a person's head, generally in long to medium (mid) shots. Too much space above the head can result in the person looking strangely 'cut off', as shown in the left image in Figure 9.4.
- **Leading lines.** The use of natural 'lines' in the setting such as furniture, a road or buildings can give depth to a frame and draw the eye to specific elements or characters in the shot.
- **Natural framing.** Objects already part of the setting can be used to frame the shot, such as trees or windows. When there is a 'frame within a frame', this can not only look effective and attract the audience's attention, but it can heighten the mood of a scene, such as reinforcing a character's isolation or entrapment by a situation.
- **Triangular composition.** As the name suggests, this technique is when the placement of the subjects form the shape of a triangle. **Triangular composition** can be a useful way to compose conversation shots with three or more people. The composition can also be used to create

depth in the frame or create a connection or relationship between the different subjects (see Figure 9.5).

Space and depth

The composition of the shot can be considered in terms of two-dimensional **space**, with the placement of objects or characters horizontally and vertically on a flat 'plane'. The **depth** within a frame refers to the three-dimensionality of the shot and how elements in the scene are positioned in terms of their distance from the camera or audience.

Space

Balance and symmetry are important to compose an aesthetically pleasing shot, but the arrangement
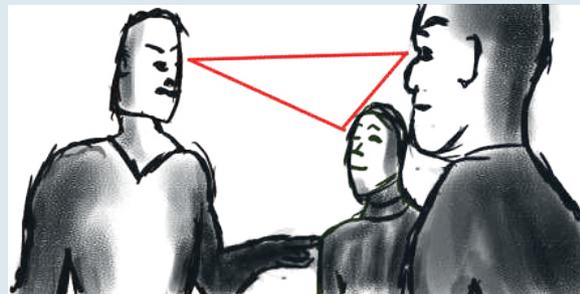
Figure 9.5 This sketch shows a common use of the triangular composition for a conversation shot. The character on the left appears more dominant as the space around them reinforces their body language. The audience can see more of that character compared to the other two characters in the frame.

of elements within the space can also create meaning:

- **Central framing.** This shot can be a figure positioned in the middle of the frame, often with symmetry in the background space on either side. **Central framing** is becoming more popular as audiences watch more media on smaller screens. This shot is popular with some directors, such as Wes Anderson.

- **Distance between objects/characters.** Showing two characters on either side of a frame or with noticeable space between them can suggest an emotional distance or intellectual/ideological differences. Space between objects and a character can indicate that something is out of reach.

- **Closed framing.** Also called *tight framing* or *crowding the frame*, this is when the camera and/or elements in the setting can appear to close in around a character. The lack of space around a character can highlight a threat towards them or contribute to a feeling of

stress or confinement. **Closed/tight framing** can also suggest feelings of intimacy or bonding between characters.

- **Open or loose framing.** When characters have noticeable space around them, often called **negative space**, this can create a sense of freedom or isolation, depending on the narrative context and other elements of the *mise en scène*.

- **Edge of the frame.** When characters or objects are pushed to the edge of the frame, this can mean only part of the character is shown, which can create a sense of isolation for a character or an uneasy feeling for the audience. This technique generally ignores conventions of head room, look or lead room and the rule of thirds.

Depth

Composing shots that show depth in the frame can create dramatic diagonal lines that the human eye naturally responds to, according to film academics Maria Pramaggiore and Tom Wallis. This can be impacted by technical choices around depth of field and what elements are in focus (see *Nelson Film, Television and New Media for QCE Units 1&2*, Chapter 4, page 56), as well as the nature of the setting:

- **Foreground and background.** Interesting compositions can be created by placing elements in the foreground and background, and it can be a way to frame multiple character actions in the one shot, as shown in Figure 9.7. A director can also highlight important props or information by placing the element in the foreground of a shot, and this is sometimes accompanied by a 'rack focus' or 'focus pull' to further draw attention to the front or back of a shot.

- **Deep staging.** By considering the foreground, midground and background of a shot, **deep staging** can create a more dynamic and 'serious' cinematic feel to a production. The resulting images can be more engaging and aesthetically pleasing for an audience. Deep staging can also be an opportunity to use perspective in shots to experiment with the scale of objects in the frame.

Album / Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 9.6 *Heartstopper* (2022) is a British coming-of-age romantic comedy series based on the webcomics and graphic novels by Alice Oseman. The Netflix series features shots with unconventional framing, such as extra headroom and characters placed on the edge of the frame. This extra space allows room for the hand-drawn style animations over the live action shots, which illustrate the feelings of the characters and reflect the visual style of the source material.

- **Flat staging.** These shots have an absence of depth and perspective, and are often created by the characters being positioned in front of walls or generally in tight settings. This technique is often used effectively in comedic productions or 'quirky' indie films, where the focus is on the character and the carefully constructed *mise en scène*. **Flat staging** can also be suggestive of the character leading an uninteresting life or feeling stuck in their situation and lacking options.

- **Inside out or 'trunk' shots.** These shots are where the camera is placed in an unusual location, such as a cupboard or boot of a car ('trunk' in America), to see the character's face as they look or reach into the area.

Lifestyle pictures/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 9.7 In *Turning Red* (2023), Mei-Mei's maths lesson is interrupted by the spectacle of her mother outside the window and the security guard trying to escort her mother from the grounds. The leading lines of the desk and windowsill draw attention to Mei-Mei's embarrassed expression, and the window frame highlights the comedy of her mother's actions in the background of the shot.

9.1 ACTIVITIES

1. **Identify** two shots that use open framing for different purposes, and two shots that use closed framing to create a different feeling. **Analyse** and **evaluate** how the same framing technique can create different meanings for the audience and **explain** the other compositional techniques or *mise en scène* decisions that contribute to that interpretation.

2. In a small group, practise your camera and composition skills by **creating** shots with a person or object in the foreground, midground and background of the shot. Take turns using the film equipment to practise changing the depth of field within the shot, and then practise a 'rack focus' shot.

3. **Experiment** with various combinations of transitions and special effects. Complete a series of test export results and consider the effects for a signature platform entry/exit, or story world element.

4. **Create** a list of potential 'Easter eggs' to place within your *mise en scène*. Objects may be intertextual references to other productions or genres you have taken inspiration from. From this list, **collect** physical Easter eggs for filming proposed multi-platform content. Use the Easter eggs to reference other platforms, episodes or characters in your other, unproduced multi-platform content.

EDITING TECHNIQUES FOR MULTI-PLATFORM PRODUCTIONS

The sequence of edited shots delivers the story to the audience. The individual units of meaning (shots, props, character actions, backgrounds, etc.) arrive in the viewer's brain in a particular sequence, where the perception of the story is constructed. Multi-platform challenges the linear edited sequence. Sometimes, concealing a story element for a later reveal is important, even in non-linear interactive scenarios.

Editing multi-platform productions for interactivity

Creators of multi-platform can design for desired audience behaviour but cannot dictate a linear audience experience, where the interactive technology allows for user agency (control).

Nudge theory holds that subtle prompts can sway the audience to a desired path. This can be as simple as editing in larger hyperlink buttons for a preferred selection, left-to right reading patterns or answering a narrative mystery. Placing 'soft'

technical barriers, such as adding more steps to click on, or a password, can discourage users from taking platform short-cuts against the storytellers' wishes.

Multi-platform content should be a distinct experience from previous episodes or other platform versions. Repeat footage from another platform should only be used if it adds a new context, such as long, uncut takes featuring one character's point of view or voice-over added to reveal additional facts. Each platform should complement the other with some unique material to extend the story. Editing should direct audiences to the next stage of intended engagement.

The following traditional edit techniques can also be applied to non-linear or multi-platform productions:

- **Arranging the order of events.** Events can be presented in sequence. Multi-platform also has to account for a variable audience knowledge prior to the 'episode'. What may be true in the story world, but unknown to the audience, makes the difference between an individual's understanding of story, plot and the narrative (see *Nelson Film, Television & New Media, QCE Units 1 & 2*, page 242).
- **Creating relationships between characters.** Combining images of characters as they respond to each other builds character relationships. This is traditionally done through shot/reverse shot. Music videos may not acknowledge performers in a scene, as if they exist in another 'plane'. Character video diaries may opt for subjective angles.
- **Creating pace and rhythm.** Excitement builds as pace and rhythm quicken. However, audiences engage better in a journey via combinations of higher and lower intensity.
- **Building emotional involvement.** Tension and use of close-up shots increase involvement. Audiences can also experience scenes from a character's point of view.
- **Building themes and concepts.** Audiences can be guided to themes which are foregrounded through the editing. The point of interactive choice or the nature of a platform offering can also capture a theme.

How editing controls text progress

According to US film studies academics David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, editing offers control over the relationships between shots: picture relationships, rhythmic relationships, space relationships and time relationships.

Some of these can be conceived differently for an interactive or multi-platform context.

Picture or graphic relationships

Editors can make a graphic connection between two scenes if there are any similarities in the actual content of the pictures. These similarities, say Bordwell and Thompson, could be in the scenery, the lighting, the costumes or what the characters are doing.

Graphic match

Editors make a **graphic match** when they match the shapes, colours or movement in one shot with those in the next shot. A graphic match is usually made with an obvious transition that the audience will notice. This is different to the usual 'invisible style' of Hollywood continuity editing, where the aim is to hide the transitions or make them seamless. Graphic matches are often used to create a metaphor or to make a clear conceptual point. A conspicuous transition allows the audience to make a comparison between the pictorial elements in the two connected shots.

Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) depicts a prehistoric ape hurling a bone, which then falls through the air. This is graphically matched in the next shot with a space station falling through the frame. The space station is of similar size, shape and screen location as the bone. The alignment and shapes are very similar, but not exact. Graphic matches with sharp cuts like this one tend to make conceptual or metaphorical points. The bone and the spacecraft connect humanity's prehistory with the future.

A graphic match that uses the softer transition of a dissolve is in *Titanic* (1997). The rusted bow of the shipwreck slowly dissolves into the carefully aligned bow of the brand-new ship. This exact and slow transition in *Titanic* works to transport the audience back in time and creates a sense of doom and loss.

Table 9.1 gives other examples of texts in which two scenes are connected by the pictorial content of each shot.

Picture and graphic relationships between platform versions can be determined by edit choices, such as colour grading. Content for multi-platform can also use the post-production process of exporting in various aspect ratios to differentiate the viewing experience. The movie *Lucy in the Sky* (2019) uses extreme changes in aspect ratios during individual shots to reflect the character's perceptions (see aspect ratios in *Nelson Film, Television & New Media QCE Units 1 & 2*, Chapter 4).

Moviestore Collection Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo

Eric Nathan/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 9.8 The non-narrative documentary *Baraka* (1992) often uses graphic match cuts to transition between different segments in the film. In shot (a) from the film, Balinese villagers perform the monkey dance while arranged in a roughly circular shape. The shape of this is matched in a change to a totally different scene made through a transition to a shot of the circular crater of an active volcano, similar to shot (b). A graphic match can work in the same way as a metaphor or simile in poetry – it can say one thing is another thing, or that one thing is like another thing.

Table 9.1 Examples of edits made on the basis of the pictorial or graphic content of the image. The relationship of shot A to shot B is purely visual.

TITLE OF TEXT	SHOT A	SHOT B
Lawrence of Arabia (1962)	Close-up shot of Lawrence striking a match	Shot of a flaming desert sun
Raiders of the Lost Ark (1981)	Titles showing the Paramount Studios mountain	Dissolve into opening shot of actual mountain where the story begins
Baraka (1992)	Medium close-up of monk's head as he enters deep meditation	Long shot of natural stone archway on seashore as waves break through the gap – position of archway corresponds to the monk's head
The Usual Suspects (1995)	Medium long shot of the mouth of a cave, which is the scene of a violent confrontation	Rim of a coffee cup belonging to the man recounting the tale of events in the cave
Titanic (1997)	Shot of the rusted bow of *Titanic* underwater	Shot of the bow of the ship just before sailing
Hugo (2011)	Shot of a large clock mechanism with a central cog	Shot of Paris streets at night radiating out from the Arc de Triomphe at the centre

Rhythmic relationships

Just as variation in the length of notes creates rhythm in music, shot length can be used to build rhythm in visual texts. Rapid shot changes create excitement, while longer shots suggest a reflective mood. Using cuts speeds up the transition, while dissolves slow it down. An accelerating tempo creates a greater feeling of excitement than a constantly fast rate of cutting.

Wider shots tend to be left on the screen for longer than close-ups. This is because it is assumed the audience needs longer to read the greater amount of detail in a long shot.

Space relationships

With clever editing, a filmmaker can make it seem that places on opposite sides of the Earth are next door to each other. For example, someone can walk out the front door of a constructed set in a Hollywood studio and into a street in Egypt.

Placing shots side by side can suggest the action is occurring within the same space. The traditional progression from extreme long shot through medium shot to close-up is a device often used to create space relationships. An establishing shot sets the scene. All other shots in the sequence are much closer, allowing the filmmaker to return to the studio for the closer shots. The audience continues to believe the action is taking place within the setting of the establishing shot.

Interactive productions may give audiences control over location, assigning an episode to a particular story location that viewers can choose to enter, much like a game structure.

This approach can result in a spatial journey for the audience. For instance, users may be immersed in an exterior setting, select a segment that takes them to the interior of a bus and then select a virtual bus stop, which takes them to a new exterior setting.

In the sci-fi horror film *Life* (2017), cross-cutting or 'simultaneous time' is used to suggest the audience has their desired resolution and the female astronaut will finally escape to safety. The horror twist is delivered with an editing shock when the interior scenes do not match the assumed exterior and the audience's momentary calm is again shattered.

Time relationships

A program can encapsulate whole lifetimes or just a few minutes of someone's life. Time can be manipulated in both the filming and the editing.

Film and television texts have experimented with different ways of exploring time since the first movies. This may be at the level of cutting from one continuity shot to another, or leaping through time as scenes change. This traditional editing of time elements can occur within each multi-platform production (see *Nelson Film, Television & New Media, QCE Units 1 & 2*, Chapter 12). However, jumping between multi-platform episodes brings potential to use each production fragment as a distinct chunk of time.

For example, the movie *Sliding Doors* (1998) captured the impact of binary choices so well that people began referring to 'sliding doors moments' in real life. The linear story is broken at a point where the character *just* misses a train as the door slides closed. An alternative outcome is shown as a parallel timeline when the character *does* catch the train and ends up with a different partner.

A movie must intercut between these alternate histories and show the same rewinding and reshowing to the whole audience. But interactive multi-platform can allow the audience to make a choice at the train door and experience their own linear story. This can be different for each viewer. YouTube clips that finish with hyperlinked options for choices to move the story forward are manipulating time in this way. They offer a linear experience, but through parallel linear timelines.

Editing techniques for time can also be applied to multi-platform in the following ways (see *Nelson Film, Television & New Media, QCE Units 1 & 2*, Chapter 12):

- **Compressing time (ellipsis).** Long passages of time can be shortened to just a few shots. For multi-platform, an episode or platform jump can bring the audience far into the future of the story.
- **Expanding time.** Prolonging the action can prolong the suspense, increase the importance of an event or draw out the emotional response in the audience. This can be achieved with high frame rates during recording, slowing down footage or dissolving between a series of stills. Multi-platform content can also insert extra time within a main story, such as a character rationalising a decision to themselves in a voice-over that is not in the main text.
- **Flashbacks.** Memories or past events can be shown by juxtaposing shots of the present with shots of the past. These may be separated by a transition. *Memento* (2000) uses a complex reverse timeline and a forward timeline, differentiated by colour versus black and white. It is possible to structure multi-platform episodes to work in reverse story order. Segments could be sequentially viewed to work backwards, and arrive at the origin point of the whole story.
- **Flashforwards.** In visual texts, these are rarer than flashbacks because they create a more obvious break in the logical order of a story. In multi-platform production, glimpses of the next episode content could be included as a teaser to prompt the selection of one of the interactive choices for the audience.
- **Cross-cutting/simultaneous time/parallel editing.** Cutting from one event to another can give the impression they are occurring simultaneously. A rule of **simultaneous time** is that events in the two or more parallel locations must come together in some way. Some time-travel films play with this idea across different eras. *The Lake House* (2006) shows characters communicating as if they exist in simultaneous time, despite being years apart. Interactive and multi-platform productions can allow audiences to activate their own cross-cutting of a narrative as they jump between platforms.

Moviestore Collection Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 9.9 The 'bullet time' effect from *The Matrix* (1999) by the Wachowskis is an extreme case of expansion of time – a technique used to heighten suspense. This special effect was a significant moment in the development of special effect technologies, so much so that the term 'bullet time' has taken over from the alternate multi-camera effect name of 'time slice'. The bullet time effect has been referenced in countless films, TV shows, video games and even live theatre since the film's release.

Structure shaped by flow of time

Platforms that establish different locations which exist at the same time can prompt the audience to cross-cut between them. Many films rely on cross-cutting of this simultaneous time to structure the film's narrative. Stephen Spielberg's first film *Duel* (1971) cuts between a car driver victim and a menacing truck, resulting in a back and forth, straightforward narrative.

Repeating the same experience multiple times and experimenting with different audience options at the end could be the backbone of a multi-platform experience. *Groundhog Day* (1993) is a famous example of reliving a repeated day on film.

Multi-platform can also be used to explore several viewpoints. *Hoodwinked* (2005) recounts the same events from the perspective of each character, gradually building up more cross-referenced facts.

Jumping between platforms is well suited to a time-travel story world. Instead of being locked into a time, the audience could be freed from it. *Looper* (2012) shows dual timelines (see braided and tandem narrative, *Nelson Film, Television & New Media, QCE Units 1 & 2*, Chapter 12, page 244) with moments of deliberate time-travel intersection.

Circular plots can be mapped into the sequence of multi-platform segment delivery. These plots begin near the end of the story, tell the lead up to that point in time and typically revisit the first scene with some additional resolving information. Protagonist voice-over is often used to help the audience negotiate these time shifts. While images and dialogue are from the past, the voice-over is spoken in the present, from the end of the narrative. This may be as diegetic or non-diegetic narration. For example, *Double Indemnity* (1944) uses an audio recording device to justify the voice-over, whereas *Sunset Boulevard* (1950) offers no excuse for voice-over from a character who is already dead at the start of the film.

Multi-platform episodes can function without any structured sequence. It may be that no segment contains any prerequisite information needed for subsequent viewing of the other segments.

This could be thought of as a montage editing approach to the final story world, built up through non-sequential impressions by jumping in and out of each platform fragment. *Arrival* (2016) gives glimpses of different moments in time throughout the film. Memory and premonition are shown to be almost the same thing. The resulting confusion about cause and effect leaves the audience with a sense that time is fragmented, and yet interconnected.

Motif in editing

A **motif** is a recurring idea, image or sound. It is repeated in the narrative and becomes significant or symbolic in some way that supports the overall meaning or theme in a story.

The word is of French origin and should not be confused with 'motive'. Motifs can be manufactured in the editing, such as the wipe transitions in *Star Wars* (1977). They can also be created by the camera or props department and revealed by the edit. The symbolic importance may be hidden until the end.

The key aspect of motif is repetition. A motif appears in several different scenes. A motif in music is called a **leitmotif** (see *Nelson Film, Television & New Media*, *QCE Units 1 & 2*, Chapter 6, page 91).

Motifs can be used to:
*   signify a character
*   reinforce an idea
*   develop a theme
*   build a sense of unity across productions.

Table 9.2 Examples of editing motifs in film

FILM	MOTIFS	EDITING SUPPORT
Citizen Kane (1941)	The word 'rosebud'	• adding audio reverb • final text reveal from blistering paint in CU
Up (2009)	Balloons	• pitch of music synchronises rise and fall • cutting on continuous tilts-up of the house
Inception (2010)	Spinning top (reality check)	• holding the shot until the top drops • holding but cutting before it drops – or not

9.2 ACTIVITIES

1   View the roadside police questioning in *Psycho* (1960) and the shower scene. Carefully freeze frame each shot. Note down its shot size and the content of the shot. **Explain** the screen elements contributing to meaning. **Identify** camera positions by mapping on a diagram for each shot to understand screen space. **Explain** rhythmic patterns of the sequences and how dialogue and editing is used to conceal. **Clarify** the meanings of the opening and closing shots.

2   List the major scenes of a film plot you are familiar with in very general terms. **Design** a multi-platform delivery of the story by grouping scenes according to certain elements. **Categorise** scenes for a separate platform according to particular settings, flashbacks or one character's scenes, etc. **Identify** scenes that must be viewed in sequence and those which can be moved within the story. **Explain** how one of the scenes could make sense as a stand-alone production. Using this scene as an entry point, **explain** how technology or design could be applied to 'nudge' audiences into the main narrative at certain points. Include references to button hyperlinks or other features (affordances) of your selected platform.

3   **Design** a treatment proposal for your own multi-platform idea. Decide on an episode/platform format based on structure shaped by flow of time. **Identify** one of the structures given in examples and map the proposed audience journey. **Apply** the structure to a diagram noting time relationships.

Unit 4 - Artistry

UNIT INTRODUCTION

Unit 4 is about artistry. It is about exploring your individual style and identity as a filmmaker, and how you can develop and enhance your ability to express yourself. It is about drawing influence from how other moving-image media traditions and artists, across historical and cultural contexts, have used technologies, languages and representations to develop their own artistic identities. It is also about how moving-image media can be used as constructive tools to express, explore and question.

You will learn about many of the moving-image media styles and movements, and how they have developed out of particular historical, social and cultural contexts. You will be encouraged to experiment with the codes and conventions to refine your artistic style as a filmmaker.

In Unit 4, you will be encouraged to explore and experiment with technological practices. By examining how moving-image media artists have used technologies to enhance their works, you will be able to draw inspiration for your own. You will evaluate the work of other artists and directors, reflecting on their approach to using technologies.

You will be able to analyse the representations created by other artists from a range of different contexts. Examining their work will allow you to think about how you might draw influence from or challenge existing representations in artistic ways.

By the end of Unit 4, you will have made a stylistic production that in some way experiments with and challenges traditional approaches.

INQUIRY QUESTIONS

TECHNOLOGIES: How do media artists use technologies to challenge conventional practices?

REPRESENTATIONS: How do media artists portray people, places, events, ideas and emotions?

LANGUAGES: How do media artists use signs, symbols, codes and conventions to create meaning?
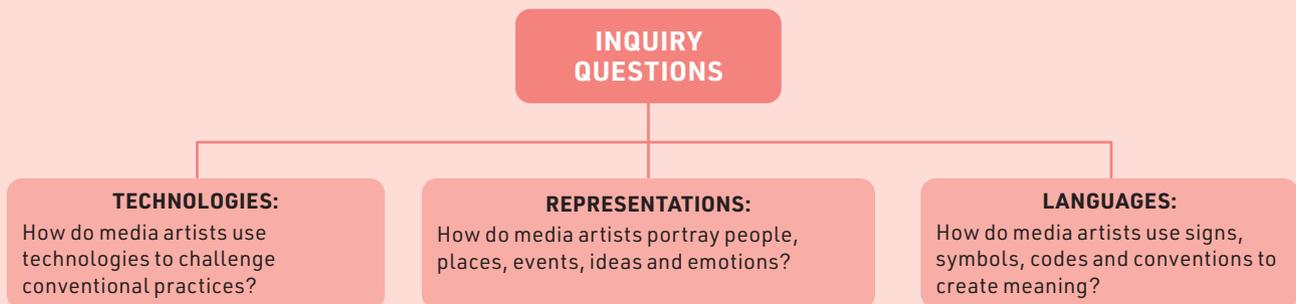
10 Moving-image media artistry

INTRODUCTION TO ARTISTRY

The concept of **artistry** emphasises the process of artmaking, skills and technical proficiency, personalised aesthetic sensibility and the awareness of context and influences.

What is artistry?

Artistry involves deliberate, personalised and technically proficient use of elements such as cinematography, sound design, editing, narrative structure and *mise en scène* to resolve the moving-image media artist's creative vision. These personalised styles drive innovation in terms of moving-image media styles, genres and forms, critic and cultural theorist André Bazin argued.

Artistry can be developed through experimentation with and refinement of media technologies, languages and representations. Moving-image media makers construct their artistic identities through drawing on influences, including internal and external contexts and artistic styles and movements.

Defining media artistry

Media artistry can be defined as the sophisticated integration of technical mastery, aesthetic understanding and creative vision in the production of audiovisual content. It encompasses both the practical dimension of skills and the conceptual dimension of innovation and aesthetics to make creative media.

Media artistry is made up of the following elements:

- **Creative vision.** The development of unique creative visions and approaches.
- **Artistic manipulaton.** The deliberate manipulation of formal elements (visual, auditory, temporal) to create meaningful experiences for audiences.
- **Technical expertise.** The application of technical expertise in service of creative expression. This is sometimes referred to as craft knowledge or artisanal skills. Craft or artisanal knowledge is integrated with contemporary production methods.
- **Awareness of audience.** There is an engagement with the intended audience. The manipulation of *mise en scène* elements like composition, colour and sound to evoke emotion and communicate meaning.
- **Engagement with aesthetic traditions.** The conscious engagement with aesthetic traditions while pushing the boundaries of form or even breaking them for creative purpose.
- **Cultural and historical contexts.** Artistry often operates within and challenges existing artistic traditions and social norms.

Artistry and aesthetics

A moving-image media maker with a refined artistic identity will craft products characterised by a distinct style and voice, a clear **aesthetic** vision

Societe Generale DES Films/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 10.1 The stunning, emotive use of close-ups in Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928) conveys the inner emotions of Joan (Renée Jeanne Falconetti). As this is contrasted against a barely present set and minimal *mise en scène*, the audience is forced to focus solely on the face in close-up. Dreyer's artistic shots still look modern today, but in the 1920s he was considered to be highly innovative.

driving representational practices and deliberate creative decisions about how to use everything in the product – technologies, languages, representations – to achieve the vision of the product's sensory impact.

Aesthetics communicate tone, narrative and depth. They also influence audience emotion. They are shaped by artistry, as these creative decisions will influence the ways in which camera movement, angles, shot size, visual composition, editing, sound design, production design and *mise en scène* are selected to realise the mood and themes of the product through visuals and auditory languages, representations and technologies.

Contextual influences and their impact on artistry

Nothing exists in a vacuum. What we see on our screens is undeniably a reflection, or mirror, of our past and present. Historical events, ideas, aesthetic traditions and local, national, global and cultural contexts all influence the distinct styles and voices of moving-image media artists. The **context** in which an artist creates will influence, to varying extents, the reasons for selecting particular technologies and languages and for constructing specific representations.

Types of contextual influences impacting artistry

The personalised aesthetic and creative vision of a moving-image media artist can be influenced by a variety of contexts, from historical events and cultural contexts at local, global and national scales, to ideas and aesthetic traditions such as film and art movements.

Historical events

Historical events have significant impact on the stories told by moving-image media artists, from influencing the narratives themselves to the technologies available. An artist may choose to structure a moving-image media product around a historical event, such as Kenneth Branagh's *Belfast* (2021), exploring a child's experience of the beginning of The Troubles in Northern Ireland in the late 1960s, or Ashish Avinash Bende's coming-of-age *Aatmapamphlet* (2023), which comedically critiques the political conflicts of 1990s India through friendship dynamics. Both of these films are considered semi-autobiographical, reflective of the directors' childhoods and personal historical contexts.

Historical events may also influence stories and be presented **allegorically**, as seen in Warwick Thornton and Brendan Fletcher's *Firebite* (2021–22, MA15+). In this television series, two Indigenous Australian vampire hunters strive to protect their land and people from the vampires. In the narrative, the vampires were brought by the British colonisers on the First Fleet to clear the land of its First Nations people. In *Firebite*, vampires stand in for the smallpox virus that arrived with Europeans and devastated Indigenous populations.

First Nations Australian filmmaker, author, actor and playwright Leah Purcell draws on historical experiences of racism by First Nations people in colonial Australia in *The Drover's Wife: The Legend of Molly Johnson* (2021). This revisionist Western subverts the Henry Lawson short story about a nameless, isolated wife of an absent drover into a story of racial violence, domestic abuse, gender and identity.

Everett Collection Inc/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 10.2 In reimagining Henry Lawson's short story into *The Drover's Wife: The Legend of Molly Johnson*, Leah Purcell wanted to explore the historical experience of Indigenous Australians, who remained silenced in the literary canon of colonial white Australia.

Cultural contexts

Film is a product of and a contributor to culture. Naturally, the cultural contexts of artists influence their artistry. Cultural contexts can shape story, themes and character behaviour.

In Iran, for example, cultural taboos and religious laws do not permit representations of queer relationships. Iranian filmmaker Sadaf Foroughi's drama *Summer With Hope (*2021) works within this cultural context by using deliberately ambiguous imagery to hint at the attraction felt by the protagonist Omid and his swimming coach Mani, but never shows or tells. The deliberately mysterious use of framing in *Summer With Hope* (e.g. framing faces and expressions out of the shot, or allowing characters to exit the shot while continuing audio) encourages the viewer to think *outside* of the frame and to read subtext into the story.

Ideas

Ideas, particularly creative ideas, are the results of synaptic connections occurring in multiple regions of the human brain. These intangible connections create thoughts, images and physical responses. Once activated, humans share and spread ideas through speech, action, words and artistic forms. Ideas can be unique to individuals, but they may also, when shared, resonate with others and find traction as a worldview, philosophy or movement.

Pictorial Press Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 10.3 The ideas of German critic and scholar Friedrich Nietzsche in relation to **nihilism** became a philosophical worldview influencing postmodern art movements and even films such as *Everything Everywhere All at Once* (2022, MA15+), where antagonist Jobu Tupaki manifests a nihilistic 'everything bagel' that will consume the existence of everything.

The creative visions of moving-image media artists are often influenced by ideas and seek to explore, communicate or challenge these ideas. An artist may, due to their personal, educational, social, cultural, economic or political context, be surrounded by or saturated in prevailing ideas. Some artists develop creative visions that support ideas, such as German filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl, whose film *Triumph of the Will* admiringly chronicles the Nuremberg Rallies and provided positive propaganda for the Nazis. Other artists subvert or question prevailing ideas, such as Greta Gerwig in *Barbie* (2023), where a fantastical, comedic approach is used to explore the consequences of hierarchical gender-based power structures.

Aesthetic traditions

Aesthetic traditions are established visual styles that have been developed over time within specific historical, cultural or artistic movements. Drawing on aesthetic traditions provides filmmakers with a recognisable framework within which to innovate, helping to enhance the emotional and thematic depth of their work and create a unique visual identity. This approach often deepens audience engagement in storytelling, as familiar aesthetics can enhance both immersion and lasting impact.

Two very different moving-image media artists drawing on elements of the aesthetic tradition of **German Expressionism** are American filmmaker Tim Burton and Australian artist Tracey Moffatt (Table 12.8, page 173 and the section on Tracey Moffatt, page 172).

Tim Burton draws on the twisted sets, **chiaroscuro** lighting, macabre or grotesque stories and characters of German Expressionism, blending these aesthetics with elements of horror, fairytales and pop culture to create his characteristic style. Burton's use of the aesthetic traditions of German Expressionism appear in all of his moving-image media works, such as *Edward Scissorhands* (1990) and *Corpse Bride* (2005).

Tracey Moffatt's film *Night Cries: A Rural Tragedy* (1989) explores cultural themes of colonialism, family trauma and identity. The aesthetic of this film combines the exaggerated settings and colour contrasts of German Expressionism to emphasise emotional states and deliver cultural critique. In *Night Cries: A Rural Tragedy* (1989), Moffatt's art design and theatrical

backdrops also allude to the aesthetics of paintings of the Arrernte peoples of central Australia, known as the 'Hermannsburg School', notably Albert Namatjira.

Local, national and global contexts

'Movies', says Mark Cousins in *The Story of Film: An Odyssey* (2011), 'are a mirror of our times.' Global contexts influence how everyday people engage with society, culture, economics and politics. As such, global contexts invariably influence moving-image media artists.

Festivals, awards and distributors shape what 'successful' content looks and sounds like, provide competition that often drives filmmaker decisions and creative visions, and influence release schedules and distribution methods. Global events enable or constrain the work of media artists and influence their stories. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic of the early 2020s and the ensuing lockdowns and social isolation stimulated increased global engagement with craft-based lifestyle television programs, such as UK series *The Great British Sewing Bee*. Worldwide technological developments such as streaming services have permitted a globalisation of audiences, meaning greater access to a greater diversity of audience, but also higher competition due to content-saturation. The worldwide emergence of artificial intelligence-enabled creative services will impact how and what artists create.

National contexts are also influential on artistry. Films produced in a specific nation will reflect, to some extent, the historical, social (e.g. values and mores), political (e.g. policy and infrastructure) and economic (e.g. funding) contexts of that country. This assumption is a key underpinning behind the film studies categorisation of **national cinema**.

Cinema was invented in France. This national historical context has, in France, resulted in significant national pride in cinema and high levels of support in terms of infrastructure, funding and promotion from the French government and cultural agencies. Government cultural and economic policy protects the domestic film industry, prioritising the production and distribution of French products over imported moving-image media products. In 2014, France was the world's second largest exporter of films (after the USA). However, contexts closer to home often provide significant influence on filmmaking. Local contexts often provide storytelling inspiration and motivation. Warwick Thornton grew up in central Australia in Alice Springs, and his feature *Samson and Delilah* (2009) responded to this local context. The film's setting in central Australia and the storytelling and characters in *Samson and Delilah* were influenced by local social and cultural contexts: community attitudes towards substance abuse among teenagers in central Australia, with the teenagers shown as worthless and brain damaged. In an interview with *Crikey*, Thornton explained that he designed the film for the local context of central Australia, with a clear creative vision of showing 'two incredibly beautiful children who have fought all their lives … and how we should be celebrating them and backing them up. I wanted to show that to central Australia'.

Developing your own identity and artistry

By merging personally and socially resonant themes with a distinct visual style and an openness to experimental or unconventional narrative, a filmmaker can begin to shape an artistic identity that is not only unique but deeply resonant.

A good example of development of artistry and identity as a filmmaker is Jane Schoenbrun's *I Saw the TV Glow* (2024). They explore themes of identity, obsession and the way media shapes self-perception and sense of reality. Schoenbrun's filmic artistry and identity is showcased in *I Saw the TV Glow* (2024) through:

- drawing from personal experiences or collective anxieties, in this case the emotional and psychological impact of media, translating feelings of alienation and confusion into horror elements that resonate with audiences in our digital age

- experimenting with narrative structures to challenge traditional forms, often merging realism with horror or surrealism to create an immersive experience that disrupts conventional storytelling

- using visual motifs to communicate emotions, often creating a sense of disorientation that mirrors their themes of obsession and identity.

What is identity?

Identity has been the subject of significant psychological research and theory, and there are many definitions of this term. Identity encompasses three key forms:

- **Individual.** A sense of place in the world (past, present and future), and what differentiates self from others.
- **Social.** A sense of belonging to a group.
- **Cultural.** A sense of belonging to a distinct cultural or ethnic group.

Identity and artistic expression

Impactful moving-image media stories express ideas about what it is to be human, what it is to belong to a particular culture, society or group, or what it is to be oneself. Central to designing personalised representations is the concept of '**identity**' – the artist's identity, a group's identity and a culture's identity. Artistic moving-image media engages us through how it resonates with our own identities.

Film can unite an audience as a collective, speak emotively to individuals or position viewers to think or feel a particular way. Filmmakers create artistic identities through the ways they reshape, reflect and resolve representations of ideas, people, places and emotions. They also shape identities through the ways they experiment with technologies to enhance or alter representations, and how they manipulate languages to develop a distinct style and voice.

Identity and narrative

Identity has long been linked to narrative. Storytelling is central to identity – to nations, to cultures and to self.

The work by political theorist and philosopher Hannah Arendt (1906–1975) provides some thought-provoking approaches to considerations of identity – particularly the role narrative and society play in the shaping of it. Arendt's own identity was influenced by her 'statelessness' between 1937 and 1951. Born Jewish in Germany, she fled to the US during the Second World War.

For Arendt, an individual does not only have a personal sense of self, but also a **narrative identity** that centres on the stories key to a sense of meaning and purpose in that individual's life. Narrative identity must be articulated and shown in public

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Maya Deren

for an individual to tell their own stories and, most significantly, to act upon their past experiences and influences.

This idea of identity and narrative can be built on by engaging with the theories of academics Anna Sfard and Anna Prusak, who suggest that identity centres on the sharing of narratives about self with and between others. Sfard and Prusak propose that individuals define multiple identities through these narratives. Every individual has an identity expressed in narratives they tell about themselves (*I*), in narratives told by others to them, about them (*you*) and in narratives shared between others about them (*they*).

Understanding these key theories reinforces for the filmmaker the importance of storytelling, and of these stories taking innovative yet resonant approaches to the exploration of identity.

Identity and non-narrative

Non-narrative media artworks often raise more questions than answers, relying on the viewer's own contextual situation as an audience to create meaning. Audiences of non-narrative film seek meaning from the association of images and sound, created through editing. For this reason, non-narrative forms provide significant scope for expression and the exploration, challenge or questioning of and experimentation with identity.

With his use of visually poetic montage constructing juxtaposition between nature and technology, and evocative Philip Glass scores, Godfrey Reggio in his *Qatsi* trilogy (see Chapter 12, page 169) appears to be questioning what it means to be human in a modern technological age.

Avant-garde innovator Maya Deren rejected commercialism, Hollywood formulas and institutional constraints to create moving-image media artworks such as *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943) and *At Land* (1944). Deren's works channelled her own emotional and intellectual identity to explore as fantasies what Deren called 'inner realities'.

Belgian moving-image-media artist Chantal Akerman's (1950–2015) works displayed a distinct artistic identity through which she often questioned domesticity. Using almost excruciatingly long and unflinching takes and **structuralist** techniques to

create visual patterns, Akerman focused on everyday routines and spaces, as in *Hotel Monterey* (1972).

Artistry and AI

The poetics of artificial intelligence (AI) and user poetics represent two sides of a new form of creative expression in the age of AI. On one side, AI operates as a remix engine, generating unpredictable and often surprising outputs through algorithmic processes. On the other side, the human user interacts with these outputs, interpreting, curating and shaping the final artwork. Together, they form a collaborative process where machine and human creativity come together, creating a new kind of artistry that neither can achieve alone.

This relationship highlights the shift from traditional notions of singular authorship to a model of distributed creativity. Artists working with AI are no longer sole creators but co-creators, working alongside machines that bring their own form of poetics to the process. This collaboration opens up new possibilities for artistic expression, where errors, randomness and machine-generated forms become integral to the creative act.

The status of AI within human collaboration is very complicated. Ultimately, it depends on the framework used to evaluate and understand art and authorship. There are many ways to conceptualise

Figure 10.4 As a director, writer and performer, Charlie Chaplin drew on his own impoverished childhood. In this scene in *The Kid* (1921), Chaplin's character 'the Tramp' cooks for an abandoned child (Jackie Coogan) in his poverty-stricken home. Chaplin's work is an example of a director being influenced by internal factors, such as personal experiences, memories and observations.

this framework, but the following are considered key aspects in the art and authorship debate. In the future, AI might be able to be used:

- **as a tool**: when AI is seen as an advanced tool guided by human creativity, the artist remains human
- **as a collaborator**: AI can be viewed as an active agent or collaborator in hybrid creative processes, sharing credit with humans
- **as an independent artist**: while AI can produce works with artistic qualities, its lack of intention and emotional depth challenges its recognition as an independent agent.

Internal influences on artistic identity

> 'Self-plagiarism is style.'
> **Alfred Hitchcock**, director

Examples of internal influences

All moving-image media artists are influenced by internal factors, because their work is centred on identity. Whether the identity expressed in final products is personal, cultural or national, the artist will always be influenced by self.

Internal influences include:
- personal experiences, memories, observations
- family and friends
- dreams and nightmares
- fears, phobias, anxieties
- beliefs – ideological, spiritual, political, social, likes and dislikes
- questions.

Fritz Lang

Director Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927), a masterpiece of German Expressionism, is an excellent example of the influence of context. These influences had an impact on both the visual style of the film and on the themes explored.

Personal experiences and memories were a strong influence on *Metropolis*. Lang had visited New York in 1924 and been struck by the skyscrapers. He stated that *Metropolis* was born from his first sight of these buildings, and from his days spent walking the New York streets and observing the city and its people.

Moviestore Collection Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 10.5 A street scene in Weimar Republic Germany (a) and a shot from the opening scene of Fritz Lang's Weimar-era science fiction film *Metropolis* (1927) (b). There are distinct similarities in these cityscapes: bustling crowds, mechanised transport, and architecture. The political, economic, social and cultural context of Weimar Republic Germany strongly influenced the style and narrative of *Metropolis (1927)*. Another influence was European imaginings of a futuristic New York City.

Drawing on these personal experiences, and further influenced by his socialist leanings towards community control of production and wealth, Lang created a cityscape in *Metropolis* that is bustling, monumental, delightful, rapidly expanding (like New York) and decadent. Yet, like New York at the time, the cityscape in *Metropolis* is also heaving with social problems (such as corruption and poverty) and built, quite literally, on inequality. The film is a demonstration of the mechanics of capitalism and its private ownership of means production.

Jub Clerc

Australian coming-of-age drama *Sweet As* (2022) is another excellent example of the role internal influences play on artistic identity. Filmmaker Jub Clerc developed the narrative and characters of the film by drawing on her own personal experiences growing up with an absent mother in Port Hedland, Western Australia.

Considered an 'at-risk' teenager by her teachers, Clerc went on a photography trip around the Pilbara, an experience she said changed her life, broadening her view of the world and igniting her lasting passion for photography.

Semi-autobiographical, '*Sweet As*' follows Murra, a young Indigenous woman from a troubled home life, who is sent on a youth photography safari in the Pilbara, where she strengthens her resilience, sense of purpose and connection to friends and to Country. Clerc's totem, the willy wagtail bird, is Murra's totem in the film. In moments of emotional turmoil, the song of the bird is there, calling to her. Clerc's internal desire to create roles for people like herself is a key factor driving her storytelling.

Contextual or external influences on artistic identity

Contextual or external factors entail what is happening socially, economically, technologically, culturally or politically prior to a moving-image media product's creation. This may include customs, taboos, laws, political events, economic or environmental conditions, available technologies or new developments, social movements, values and beliefs, cultural groups and changes.

Context can involve what happens during the product's creation (such as production constraints and conditions) and unexpected events. It can also extend to reactions (immediate and long term) to the product. In terms of the key concepts, context relates to institutions (funding and legal), audiences (expectations and values), technologies (availability and innovations), languages (codes and conventions) and representations (prevailing ideas, beliefs, emotions, etc).

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Jub Clerc

Examples of contextual influences

Fritz Lang

Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* is set in a future where the technologically advanced, luxurious existence of the upper classes is supported by the labours of a large, oppressed working class living in the hidden underground of the city. This plot can be interpreted as both a comment on the political situation of post-First World War Germany, and a warning for the future.

Politically, Germany was making its first attempt at a democracy through the Weimar Republic. Culturally, artistic freedom flourished, but at the same time the 1920s saw a hyperinflation crisis, continual street riots, tension between various political parties (communism versus the rise of fascism), and growing anxiety and dissatisfaction with the German government. Socially, Germany was continuing the rapid process of modernisation and industrialisation that had commenced with its unification in 1871.

In this context, German audiences sought films that engaged with technology but removed them from the present, through historical narratives or otherworldly science fiction. Fritz Lang therefore took the relevant contemporary issues of poverty, power struggle and anxiety for the future and placed these in a metaphorical future. In this setting, heavily stylised *mise en scène* and technological innovations distanced the audience but allowed exploration of contemporary political and social questions.

Jane Campion

Jane Campion is an award-winning New Zealand filmmaker and a distinct voice in contemporary cinema. Her works are driven by psychologically complex characters (often with repressed desires) and explore gender roles and interpersonal dynamics, focusing on women's experiences. Her artistry, evident in films such as *The Piano* (1993) and *Power of the Dog* (2021), responds to a variety of external influences and contextual factors.

Campion grew up in New Zealand, an environmental influence continually present in her work. The rugged, isolated landscapes of New

Figure 10.6 In *Metropolis (1927)*, Lang created a symbolic protagonist, Freder, whose character arc seemed to speak for the experiences of the German audience – a witness of horrors (for Germany, of the First World War) and then an observer of political instability. Freder in *Metropolis (1927)* is the privileged son of a wealthy industrialist. The character of Freder is a direct reflection of the director's social context.

ArenaPal/Collection Christophel

Zealand are used in films such as *Sweetie* (1989), *The Piano* (1993) and *Power of the Dog* (2021) to symbolise the inner turmoil and ultimate resilience of her characters.

Campion was raised in theatrical circles but chose to study anthropology at university. Anthropology is the study of human cultures and societies and how they developed. Campion's anthropological knowledge shapes her films' focus on social or cultural expectations, particularly of women, and the impacts of non-conformity.

Campion also went to art schools in London and Sydney, where she studied painting. From art school, she drew on numerous influences for her symbolic imagery and visual composition, in particular Frida Kahlo and Joseph Beuys.

Finding painting too restrictive, Campion then attended the Australian Film, Television and Radio School in Sydney. At film school and in her early forays into the film industry, Campion noted how men dominated filmmaking contexts. Her works (such as *The Piano*, *Bright Star* and television series *Top of the Lake*) reflect this context of production, examining complex female protagonists who grapple with sexuality, power and autonomy as they seek to navigate restrictive social structures.

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Jane Campion: A portrait

Figure 10.7 Jane Campion's film *Bright Star* (2009) explores the romantic relationship between modern-spirited Fanny Brawne and Romantic poet John Keats. The story takes its inspiration from John Keats' writings to his muse, Fanny Brawne.

Literary influences often shape Campion's work, providing inspiration for narratives. For example, *An Angel at My Table* (1990) was based on the autobiography of author Janet Frame and *The Portrait of a Lady* (1996) adapts Henry James's novel.

Jane Campion is an excellent example of how artistry can be shaped by the artist's contextual factors and external influences.

Stylistic influences

Passionate about their art and developing their own artistry, moving-image media artists engage in continual critical viewing of other artists' work, becoming saturated in the work of others. Understanding how others make moving-image media products allows the artist to learn technique, and thus reform, adapt or innovate use of languages, technologies and representations. No moving image is ever made in isolation, without influence.

Examples of stylistic influences

German Expressionism

German Expressionism's shadowy **aesthetics** and psychological themes (see Chapter 11, page 143) directly influenced *film noir* through the exodus of German filmmakers such as Fritz Lang to the US during the 1930s.

The contemporary influence of German Expressionism can be seen in all psychological genres, such as horror, thriller, suspense, crime and the work of Alfred Hitchcock. It can also be seen in the fantastical, dark supernatural worlds of directors such as Tim Burton.

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Out of darkness: the influence of German Expressionism

Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window*

An analysis of the style of Tim Burton

Figure 10.8 A murderer approaches in Fritz Lang's *M* (1931). As an Expressionist filmmaker, Lang's clear use of style helped lay the groundwork for the development of *film noir's* distinct visual style in the US by the end of the 1930s. The influence of German Expressionism on *film noir* is a clear illustration of stylistic influences.

Figure 10.9 Humphrey Bogart in *The Maltese Falcon* (1941). This shot demonstrates 'typical' use of shadow in *film noir* – which was directly influenced by the shadows in German Expressionist film (compare to the shot from *M* in Figure 10.8.) Many German directors fled to the US during the 1930s, providing a direct influence from German Expressionism on US *noir* films. Artists can often be influenced by a variety of styles, not just by one movement.
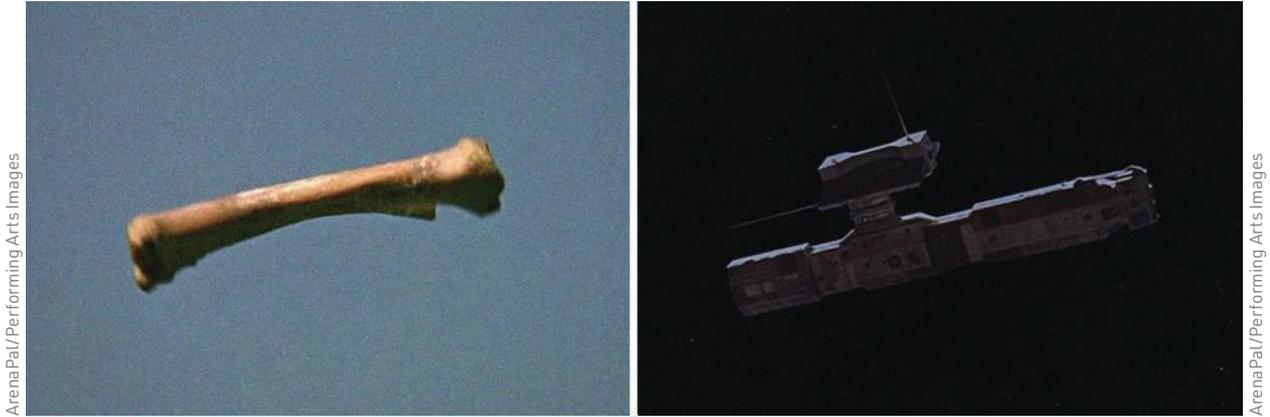
Figure 10.10 The final frames of the 'Dawn of Man' opening sequence in Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) contain on of the most famous cuts in moving-image history (along with the shot of the eye in Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1959). A thigh bone is graphically matched to a spaceship in the second shot. The understated stylistic influence of Soviet montage editing style is clear in Kubrick's juxtaposition of shots. Like Sergei Eisenstein, Kubrick uses montage to birth a new idea from the linking of unrelated images.

Stylistic influences are not limited to visual elements of moving image. They are also present in narrative, audio and editing. Stanley Kubrick's use of montage in the 'Dawn of Man' sequence in *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) draws directly from Sergei Eisenstein's Soviet montage technique, using a cut to link the beginning of human violence to the development of human endeavour. Potentially reinforcing the choice of this stylistic influence was Kubrick's contextual influence of the Cold War – a struggle between the ideologies of communism and capitalism.

Jane Schoenbrun

Jane Schoenbrun's work, such as *I Saw the TV Glow* (2024), explores gender identity and dysphoria, often merging horror and avant-garde traditions with social critique. Schoenbrun's unique cinematic style reflects stylistic influences such as analogue horror, 1990s reality television, David Lynch's use of surrealism and horror to critique suburbia and cult supernatural coming-of-age drama *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997–2003).

Baz Luhrmann

Bollywood cinema's use of music and myth has had a substantial stylistic impact on Australian filmmaker Baz Luhrmann's 'Red Curtain' films. This is especially evident in the final sequences of *Moulin Rouge* (2001).

Music, in the form of Italian opera and MTV videos, influenced the aesthetic and editing style of Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet* (1996).

Using the key concepts to create artistry

Today, audiences are highly literate in moving-image media. They have trained through years of viewing. Technological developments are progressing faster than ever before, with endless possibilities by integrating AI. Languages in formalised **mainstream** institutions (such as Hollywood) are slower to adapt, and representations can often be tangled in stereotype. As technologies of production and use change, the possibilities for innovation and artistry increase.

Artistry with languages and representations

Moving-image media artists develop their own artistry through challenging prevailing codes and conventions, and experimenting with languages and representations.

Artistry with languages and representations can be developed through deliberate aesthetic choices, such as:

- **using a single long take to show a long period of time.** Russian filmmaker Alexander Sokurov uses this technique to express 1000 years of history in *Russian Ark* (2002).

- **composing each shot with a distinct colour palette to convey nostalgia.** This characterises the work of American director Wes Anderson, such as in *Moonlight Kingdom* (2012), *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014), *Fantastic Mr Fox* (2009), *The Wonderful Story of Henry Sugar* (2023) and *Asteroid City* (2023).

- **using close-ups to powerfully express an individual's inner psychological state.** An excellent example of this is in Danish filmmaker Carl Theodor Dreyer's *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928).

- **exploring a personal event through mixing forms.** The use of animation, poetry and music to explore cultural identity can be seen in Ann Marie Fleming's *Window Horses: The Poetic Persian Epiphany of Rosie Ming* (2016).

- **synthesising influences into a unique personal style.** Ashish Avinash Bende blends Wes Anderson-style colour palettes and composition with the editing and transition style of Edgar Wright, and representations influenced by his personal experiences to create *Aatmapamphlet* (2023).

Expressive experimental *avant-garde*

Expressive and stylistic moving-image products created through significant experimentation with representations and languages are generally referred to as *avant-garde* or 'experimental' film. *Avant-garde* is French for 'ahead of the crowd'. Moving-image media products under this banner are always a vehicle for filmmaker expression, creative innovation and learning about the potential of moving-image media.

Media artists working in the *avant-garde* often have a social concern driving their work and an underpinning belief in the cultural and political benefits of making film. Expressive *avant-garde* media products are generally characterised by:

- **experimentation.** This often occurs in terms of narrative or visual representation, or as a departure from current norms or conventions.

- **focus on the lyrical, poetic, aesthetic or abstract,** such as beauty for its own sake.

- **frequent iconoclasm.** *Avant-garde* productions often mock conventional values – for instance, through a focus on extremes of eccentricities.

- **restricted context of production and use.** Small budgets, lack of studio use and release for local audiences are common institutional features of expressive productions.

- **varied creative processes.** Some artists carefully plan their choices, while others prefer spontaneity, with the filming process itself as an act of expression.

- **expression.** Social or personal expression is a key motivator in the creation of expressive productions.

- **artistic fusion.** Avant-garde productions often combine or fuse together elements from other artistic mediums, mixing and manipulating forms to further expressiveness.

- **Lack of characters.** Instead of humans, nature or inanimate objects may be the central focus.

Artistry with technologies and institutions

Artistry also encompasses the use of technologies, such as experimentation with editing conventions, including the purpose and use of cutting. The cinema of the French New Wave (directors such as François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard) uses a cut not simply to progress narrative, but instead to linger on beauty.

Editor Walter Murch assembled the films of Francis Ford Coppola (such as *The Godfather*) using editing technologies to tell the emotional truth of the story. In his book *In the Blink of an Eye*, Murch outlined the six characteristics of his editing artistry.

1. cutting for emotion
2. advancing the story
3. maintaining rhythm and pace of the story's tone
4. guide and control what the audience sees (**eye trace**)
5. re-create reality for the screen by using/breaking the 180-degree rule
6. establish physical space – where objects are in relation to each other

For Lotte Reiniger (see Chapter 12, page 171), expressive moving-image media artist, animation technologies were key to her artistry. Reiniger's development of the multiplane camera in the 1920s allowed her to create the illusion of depth in her animations, with flat layers of artwork moved in front of a camera at various speeds and distances. Reiniger's

artistry with multiplane technology later enabled Disney to develop its animation prowess, beginning with *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* in 1937.

American animator Adam Pesapane (better known as PES) creates artistry through mastery of production technologies, using stop-motion animation of familiar objects in symbolic, unfamiliar ways. PES's short film *Fresh Guacamole* (2012) is the shortest film to be nominated for an Academy Award (Best Short Animated Film). In this film, PES replaces the familiar objects involved in the creation of guacamole with gambling items such as dice and poker chips. He experiments with animating inanimate objects and removes narrative to form a clear stylistic aesthetic.

Animation has a long history of being used in advertisements for institutions. In *Honda Paper* (2015), PES uses stop-motion animation technologies and paper collage to create an advertisement for vehicle manufacturer Honda. PES received an Emmy nomination, an institutional commendation of his artistry.

Artistry for audiences

How audiences interpret meaning in moving-image media products varies according to contexts of use. Audience interpretation can be impacted by contextual factors, such as means of access (e.g. the viewing device), personal experiences, government censorship, social customs, or cultural values and subcultural allegiance.

However, regardless of context, the technical proficiency and creative vision is always clear for audiences. Audiences will have a clear expectation of what the next Tim Burton or Baz Luhrmann moving-image media story looks and sounds like, due to the established artistry, aesthetic and voice of these moving-image media artists.

A filmmaker's artistry shapes how audiences connect with a story, influencing emotions, thoughts and perspectives. Filmmakers invite viewers to experience new worlds and confront different viewpoints. This artistry can lead to deeper emotional resonance, introspection and even cultural influence, with moving-image media products having the power to shift societal attitudes and values. Warwick Thornton's works, for example, challenge non-Indigenous audiences to accept First Nations cultural autonomy.

A moving-image media artist's product can, ultimately, help audiences see themselves and their world in new ways.

Weblinks
Fresh Guacamole (2012) by PES
Honda Paper (2015)

10.1 ACTIVITIES

1   Select a moving-image media artist from this section and view two or more of their key products. **Identify** the key languages, technologies and representations characteristic of the artist's style. **Identify** what has influenced their artistry, demonstrating understanding gained from research. **Analyse** how the artist has achieved artistry with technologies, languages and representations. **Evaluate** the extent to which contexts have influenced each artist's personalised use of technologies, representations and languages.

2   View Fritz Lang's film *Metropolis* (1927). **Analyse** how the director makes a comment about the conditions of the workers and the wealthy, **examining** film languages such as *mise en scène* and editing. **Evaluate** the strengths and weaknesses of these languages in making such a comment.

3   View Jub Clerc's film *Sweet As* (2022). **Analyse** how the director's internal influences shape the film's languages and representations and **evaluate** the extent to which these influences have shaped the film's representations and languages.

4   **Identify** your own influences. Are they internal or external/contextual? **Evaluate** the significance of each influence in terms of your own artistry.

5   View works by 5–10 moving-image media artists mentioned in this chapter. **Identify** which artist's work you like best, **identifying** what it is about their products that resonates with you. **Analyse** the artist's techniques, technical and symbolic codes and contexts. **Make judgements** about what the artist's key representations, languages or technologies are across their work. **Evaluate** which of these representations, languages or technologies you will be influenced by and why.

AUTEURS

If someone asked you to watch the new Quentin Tarantino or Greta Gerwig film, you would know what to expect. This is because they are what cinema analysts call *auteurs*.

The word *auteur* is French for 'author'. In film studies, it usually refers to a director who is widely respected and seen to have a particular artistic style. An *auteur's* films have a high level of artistic vision and an interesting technical style that breaks new ground. Their style is highly recognisable and is infused with a unique sensibility.

Not every director is considered an *auteur*, only those whose productions are considered works of film art. Current *auteurs* in the film industry include directors James Cameron, Jane Campion, Sofia Coppola, Ang Lee, Jordan Peele, Christopher Nolan, Martin Scorsese and Chloé Zhao. Past *auteurs* include Alfred Hitchcock, John Ford and Orson Welles.

The term *auteur* was popularised in the 1950s in the French film criticism journal *Cahiers du cinéma* (*Cinema Papers*).

Auteur theory

After five years of Nazi occupation in the Second World War, French cinemas began showing US films again. These now seemed refreshingly new, and they excited French critics so much that a whole literature of film criticism about them came to be written in the *Cahiers du cinéma* journal. With French critics exposed to the works of Alfred Hitchcock, John Ford and Billy Wilder for the first time, they developed the theory of the director as *auteur* (or author). Although this concept seems obvious now, at the time most people considered films on the basis of plot, character and setting. These were the standard criticism elements from literature. The filmic elements that a director might put in were not considered in the way they are today.

Auteur **theory** is an approach that sees the director as the creative force behind a film. The *Cahiers* group of critics tied the idea of *auteur* very closely to their concept of *mise en scène*. French critics recognised that films are a team effort and that directors may have little control over the production process or even the script. But directors do have control over the staging of the shots and the *mise en scène*. Therefore, the term *auteur* refers to the director's style as recognisable within the *mise en scène*.

To be worthy of *auteur* theory investigation, a director has to have the following characteristics.

- **Recognisable personal style.** The director's style has to be visible and identifiable as belonging mostly to them. For instance, Wes Anderson's colour palettes and odd narratives are instantly recognisable as his signature style.

- **Consistency.** From film to film, *auteurs* have particular styles and concerns they carry over.

Figure 10.11 Directors who have become so well known that they are 'household names' can be thought of as *auteurs*. These are individuals with their own special style of movie production. Director Greta Gerwig (a) is famous for telling stories about women and the female experience, and is now best known for her direction in the film *Barbie* (2023). Wes Anderson (b), director of films such as *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014), *Moonrise Kingdom* (2012) and *Asteroid City* (2023), has a distinctive style with trademark features such as zip pans and strong use of colour. He also uses carefully constructed and elaborate *mise en scène*, strong locations and very tightly targeted pop music. Taika Waititi (c) is considered a modern *auteur* for his films *Boy* (2010) and *Hunt for the Wilderpeople* (2016). In his directorial style, New Zealander Waititi is known for quirky comedy films with witty dialogue, although he has also worked on mainstream Hollywood films, such as *Thor: Ragnarok* (2017) and *Thor Love and Thunder* (2022).

When critics look at their collected works, they can see shared filming techniques and consistent themes or worldviews.

- **Technical competence.** *Auteurs* are at the top of their craft and are good leaders. They have a practical hand in many aspects of their films as well as directing. Some also produce their films, some edit and some have a hand in the scripting.

- **Deep meaning making.** *Auteurs* make films that have many layers of meaning and go beyond pure entertainment. In some way, their films reveal a unique perspective on the human condition.

Criticism of *auteur* theory

The *auteur* approach to film criticism was very popular in the 1960s. However, after that period, critics developed other much deeper theoretical ways of thinking about film. *Auteur* 'theory' isn't really a theory in the strict sense of the idea. Rather, it is a way of categorising films by director and by artistic quality.

The main criticisms of *auteur* theory include:

- **lack of recognition of team effort.** Films are created in an industrial process involving the efforts of hundreds of people. While some directors (such as the Coen brothers) take on many roles, it is unfair to credit them solely. The idea of the *auteur* hides the input of other creatives. Consider what might have been lost in Alfred Hitchcock's shower scene in *Psycho* (1960) without Bernard Herrmann's musical score.

- **codes have meaning in the film only.** *Auteur* theory assumes that the director has control over what the film means. The theory gives the power to the 'encoder'. Modern approaches credit the audience (the decoders) with power to create their own meanings as well.

- **personality cult.** A great work of art should be seen for what it is, not praised because it has been directed by a particular individual. Personality is not the same as artistic value.

- **male bias.** Most of those who are regarded by critics as *auteurs* are men. Feminists say this is because the theory favours male approaches based on powerful control. More collaborative creative styles are not generally used by *auteurs*.

Producer as *auteur*

The 'producer as *auteur*' is a phrase used to describe the way in which creative control of a film production is 'wrestled' from a director by a producer.

David O Selznick is an example of producer as *auteur*. During production of the now famous *Gone with the Wind* (1939), Selznick oversaw every level of production from direction (he replaced the film director during production) to editing and marketing. He even introduced his own personal approach to style – the famous crane shot over downtown Atlanta was his making.

Another example is Jerry Bruckheimer, who has created a label out of his name, 'Jerry Bruckheimer Films'. When his signature label is seen at the start of a film, viewers already have a strong understanding of what to expect: action–adventure buddy films such as *Top Gun* (1986), *Bad Boys* (1995), *Gone in 60 Seconds* (2000), *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl* (2003) and *The Lone Ranger* (2013). There are many stylistic and thematic similarities between these films, suggesting that Bruckheimer has forged an identity in the film landscape.

A contemporary example is Jordan Peele, who is new to the directing world but instantly has shown his artistry over certain worldwide issues. As an African-American, Peele explores identity crises for African-Americans through generational trauma, colonialism, belonging and connection to culture. When audiences see a Jordan Peele film, they often expect the horror or drama genre underlying the overarching exploration of Black identity in America. This is played out in films such as *Get Out* (2017), *Us* (2019) and *Nope* (2022).

Auteur structuralism

Auteur theory developed into a new form of analysis during the 1960s called ***auteur* structuralism**.

Auteur structuralism is a type of analysis that combines the study of a director's identity with another form of study called 'structuralism'. Structuralism is the study of genre and the structure of narrative (including the three-act structure).

Structuralism (created by Claude Lévi-Strauss) in the context of film studies is a way of examining stories as a system essentially composed of two

levels. The two structures of the film text combine to create meaning:

- **Surface structures (the first level).** These are the characters and *mise en scène* of the diegesis, or story world. This level communicates the story, and it is what viewers 'read' as the story unfolds.

- **Deep structures (the second level).** These are the themes and recurring motifs that form the ideas for the story. These deep structures often form patterns that shape the way story unfolds. This level is described as 'hidden' and not always noticed by viewers. To be able to read it may require some interpretive thinking on behalf of the viewer.

Structuralism is used to identify and isolate the patterns within the deep structures of one film, and these patterns are then compared against other films by the same director. Through this method, film critic Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (*auteur* structuralism's biggest supporter) discovered that a film's patterns inside the deep structure are not at all unique to that film. That pattern can be used to categorise a director's body of work. Thus, certain films can be grouped according to an observed pattern. The group is called a **director's *oeuvre*** (director's work).

Auteur structuralism and Steven Spielberg

In studying the observable patterns in the deep structures of Steven Spielberg films, distinct groups of films can be isolated and labelled. One group can be shaped by patterns related to the binary opposition of 'humanity and monster'. This *oeuvre* might be labelled as Spielberg's 'dominion of

humanity' films, as the value of 'monster' is eventually overcome at the end of the story by the value of 'humanity'. This group might include the films *Jaws* (1975), *Jurassic Park* (1993), *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977) and *Duel* (1971). This type of analysis groups films together based on elements not necessarily noticeable to the naked eye. *Jaws* and *Duel*, for example, or *Jaws* and *Close Encounters* are different at the surface structure level of sharks, trucks and aliens. However, within their deep structures, the themes and recurring motifs form the same patterns that shape the story – a monster arrives and presents a challenge. Humanity then establishes some kind of dominion in relation to the monster.

Spielberg himself sees similarities between *Jaws* and *Duel*. The ending of *Jaws* (the death of the shark as it falls into the ocean depths) is actually a mirror-finish to that of *Duel* (the monster truck falls to its death down into a ravine). Spielberg intentionally shot the death of the shark as an homage to his earlier film because he saw the two films as sharing thematic elements. Spielberg even used the same sound effects of the 'dying' truck while the shark sank in the ocean.

Using *auteur* structuralism to look at more of Spielberg's work, another group of films may feature patterns of a different nature. These patterns could be related to the binary opposition of 'humanity and machine'. This particular *oeuvre* might be labelled Spielberg's 'submission of humanity' films, since the value of 'humanity' is eventually deposed in favour of inevitable technologies. This group of films might feature *Minority Report* (2002), *A.I. Artificial Intelligence* (2001) and *Ready Player One* (2018).

Figure 10.12 The final moments of the 'monster truck' as it crashes into a deep ravine in Steven Spielberg's *Duel* (1971). This scene was re-created in *Jaws* (1975), where in a similar incident the shark falls into the depths of the ocean, defeated. The same sound effects used for the truck also found their way into the death scene of the shark.

United Archives GmbH/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 10.13 A study of the sci-fi film *Arrival* (2016) under *auteur* structuralism offers interesting insight into how the film interrogates institutions. The recurring **motifs** in the film seem to hover around a binary opposition of transparency versus reservations or distrust.

Moviestore Collection Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo

How to use *auteur* structuralism

The patterns and meaning of the themes and recurring motifs in the deep structures can be discovered by positioning motifs into binary oppositions. For example, creating a table with the initial headings of 'protagonist' and 'antagonist' can be helpful in setting up the binary oppositions. Then the film motifs can be analysed using those headings.

Patterns are observed by studying the varying relationships among all the identified and categorised motifs. What is most significant about the patterns is what it means. After examining the relationships, it is best to articulate the meaning in a clear concise sentence. This sentence becomes the pattern that shapes the text. That pattern can then be used to isolate a director's *oeuvre*.

Table 10.1 is an example of categorising the recurring motifs in the film *Arrival* (2016). The table highlights ways the recurring motifs come to symbolise qualities of the film's protagonist, Louise Banks. Other recurring motifs seem to equally symbolise qualities of the film's antagonist, Ian Donnelly. However, as the film progresses, the personality of Donnelly changes and he eventually abandons his original position (the value that he represents) and his values merge with those of Louise Banks. This could be the pattern that shapes the ways in which the story functions – a pattern suggesting that institutions should be more transparent. Multiple values are being communicated here, but a suggested binary opposition of 'transparency and reservation' might be useful for an analysis.

Once the motifs are understood and a pattern is discovered, the director's identity can then be studied and articulated. A director's identity in *auteur* structuralism is connected to how the surface structures (particularly the *mise en scène*) reflect the patterns in the deep structures.

If the *mise en scène* is used in a careful way to express the ideas found in the deep structures, then the director is deemed to be an *auteur*. The consistencies between the surface and deep structures operate as a measure for artistry. However, if the *mise en scène* is not used in a functional way, then the director is deemed a ***metteur en scène***, meaning that *mise en scène* is present, just not carefully constructed in relation to what is going on in the deep structures.

The importance of *auteur* structuralism faded shortly after its beginning with the advent of post-structuralism and the publication of *The Death of the Author* (1967) by literary theorist Roland Barthes.

RGR Collection/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 10.14 In *My Darling Clementine* (1946) the director John Ford often used *mise en scène* to communicate the themes of nature and civilisation. Wyatt Earp, representing civilisation, is constantly framed amid untamed and wild nature. Ford's ability to articulate this binary opposition symbolically indicates his insight and skill as an *auteur* director.

Table 10.1 Categorising the recurring motifs in the film *Arrival* (2016)

PROTAGONIST	ANTAGONIST
Louise Banks	Ian Donnelly
The individual	The organisation
Will	Force
Trust	Deception
Patience of science	Impatience of army
Open communication	Restricted communication
Pens and pencils	Guns
Civilian clothes	Uniforms
Binary opposition = transparency	Binary opposition = reservation

10.2 ACTIVITIES

1. **Experiment** with resolution sizes to see if you can find a unique aesthetic that could be used to convey story.

2. **Analyse** a film to determine its chief binary oppositions. Once you have determined them, create a table and place the binary

▶ oppositions at the top of each column. Go back to the film and **examine** the obvious motifs as well as the hidden ones. Try to think of as many as you can. **Consider** where each motif belongs in your table and place them accordingly under each binary opposition. **Explain** how each binary opposition you determined shapes the story. **Identify** how the ending of the film works to see how the conflict is resolved and the story is shaped. To do this, you could answer questions such as: Who wins? Who loses? Why? For example, from Table 10.1 for *Arrival*, you could argue that 'control' is not always the necessary approach when meeting alien beings for the first time. **Evaluate** any correlations between the *mise en scène*, the binary oppositions of the text and the director of your chosen film. For example, does the *mise en scène* reflect the binary oppositions in any way? **Interpret** this correlation and draw **conclusions** about the worth, significance and status of the director.

AUTEURS AND THE KEY CONCEPTS

Like all directors, *auteurs* still manipulate technologies, create various representations and rely on the creative use of media languages to enhance their projects. Filmmaking is not done in a vacuum. It is not something that is created separately to current trends and thinking about production practices. Directors today frequently make choices in response to the various contexts of production when approaching their stories.

Creative vision through technologies, representations and languages

Technologies are a major part of the context of filmmaking. Much of the film practice is guided by the ways in which technologies are made accessible to filmmakers. Aesthetics are also shaped by the ways in which technologies are employed.

Filmmakers constantly experiment with representations. When changes are made to conventional representations, new aesthetics are inevitably constructed that present exciting new directions in cinema.

Languages conjure up new forms of expression that change the nature of the image, the screen production itself and its reception.

Many directors find the shifts very challenging. This is not because it is difficult for them to manage, but because technologies, representations and film languages are constantly growing and changing within the industry, and that affects the director's identity and the nature of the moving-image media production.

Technologies

Technologies are the backbone of the entire film process: after all, without the simple technology of the camera, film would not exist. Many directorial identities are shaped in response to technologies.

Quentin Tarantino and technologies

Tarantino is outspoken about his ideas regarding digital technologies. However, apart from the visual look of the image, Tarantino also makes connections between reception and celluloid film.

The audience experience of celluloid is as much a part of the filmmaking practice. This is not so much a discussion about art as it is about a kind of visual culture. Tarantino says that with digital cinema the audience is robbed of a particular experience that can only be attained through celluloid. Again, this comes down to aesthetics, but it is also about how the illusion of movement is lost in the digital image.

Film is shot and projected at a certain rate of frames per second. In Australia, it is usually 24 frames per second. The camera does not actually record movement, but instead takes a series of photos that offers the illusion of movement when

Figure 10.15 Tarantino's use of celluloid film and antique lenses in his productions changed the way in which his aesthetic functioned in screen space. For many contemporary viewers, this was a new aesthetic because the technologies used to create it have not been in circulation for nearly 50 years.

A.F. Archive/Alamy Stock Photo

projected. When a viewer is seated and watching a celluloid film projection, the viewer witnesses the 'magic of movies' – that illusion of movement from the physical rapid movement of photos whizzing through the projector. The flicker and sudden movement of the photo, in combination with the physical presence of it, is what Tarantino qualifies as the magic of cinema motion.

Celluloid directors have made celluloid image acquisition popular again. There is a growing market for celluloid photography and filmmaking, which has resulted in an analogue renaissance. Tarantino's concern stems from the shift in aesthetics that comes out of them. It is not a question of quality, but about **haptic visuality**, or the material presence and texture of the celluloid film. This is known as 'the skin of the film', those imperfections that appear on celluloid film that give it a unique look. Digital film removes these marks so that the image looks much cleaner by comparison.

Tarantino typically employs the use of older cameras such as Panavision for the wide-screen image it offers. This 2.76:1 aspect ratio was made famous by earlier classics such as *Ben-Hur* (1959). In some of Tarantino's productions, he has even resorted to sourcing antique lenses that haven't been in circulation since the film *Khartoum* (1966). Tarantino's choice to shoot this way reflects not only his interest in the experience of celluloid film, but also an aesthetic that seems to be dissipating more and more from the film landscape. But Tarantino is not about resurrecting technologies or embracing some kind of zombie formalism merely for the sake of it. His position is similar to that of Kodak's advertising – 'not nostalgia, but appreciation'. It is based on his desire to project the film in 70-mm print, 'for people who care' as he puts it.

Tarantino says that the digital image resembles the video imagery of television, and that, in terms of aesthetics, shooting in digital merges television with the big screen. In other words, the silver screen is cheapened by the presence of the digital camera at the point of production and at the level of projection.

Tarantino's artistry lies in his skill in crafting an aesthetic that foregrounds the physicality and imperfection of celluloid. The flickering motion, grain and depth inherent to film stock evoke a type of 'visual authenticity' that he believes digital technologies lack.

Barry Jenkins and technologies

Barry Jenkins, an acclaimed African-American filmmaker, exemplifies artistry through his innovative use of cinematic technologies to craft films that are both visually stunning and emotionally profound. Known for his focus on intimate human experiences, Jenkins employs a combination of cutting-edge tools and classical techniques to create an aesthetic that amplifies the emotional core of his narratives.

In *Moonlight* (2016), Jenkins collaborated with cinematographer James Laxton to use digital cameras and anamorphic lenses, achieving a look that blends rich, saturated colours with soft, naturalistic lighting. The choice of technologies allowed Jenkins to depict the film's Miami setting in a dreamlike yet grounded manner, where colours and textures evoke the internal worlds of the characters. The use of digital tools enabled precise control over lighting and colour grading, resulting in an evocative palette that visually communicates themes of identity, longing and transformation.

Jenkins' artistry is further evident in his use of camera movement and framing. Employing Steadicam and smooth tracking shots, Jenkins creates a sense of fluidity and immersion, drawing viewers into the characters' emotional landscapes. For instance, the iconic scene where the protagonist Chiron learns to swim in the ocean is shot with a delicate interplay of handheld and stabilised techniques, capturing both the vulnerability and empowerment of the moment. Digital tools allowed Jenkins to fine-tune the balance between realism and lyricism, giving the scene its unforgettable resonance.

Sound design is another area where Jenkins innovates through technology. In *If Beale Street*

Figure 10.16 In *If Beale Street Could Talk* (2018), Barry Jenkins explores the suffering of African-American families when the justice system jails the men they love.

Lifestyle pictures/Alamy Stock Photo

Could Talk (2018), Jenkins uses layered soundscapes to complement the film's lush visuals. By combining diegetic sounds, such as street noise and whispered conversations, with Nicholas Britell's orchestral score, Jenkins creates an auditory experience that deepens the audience's connection to the story. The precision afforded by digital sound editing technologies enables this seamless integration of sound and image.

Jenkins' approach to filmmaking demonstrates how technology can be wielded to enhance artistry rather than overshadow it. His ability to merge digital innovation with classical storytelling principles ensures that his films remain deeply humanistic while pushing the boundaries of cinematic expression. Barry Jenkins' mastery of technologies serves as a powerful example of how diverse directors use artistry to redefine the emotional and visual potential of modern filmmaking.

Representations

Representations in television and cinema are the re-presentations of the world as seen by the directors and other creatives behind a project. These representations can be manipulated using various technical and symbolic codes to create a particular perspective.

Greta Gerwig and representations

Greta Gerwig has gained popularity in the film industry in the past 10 years through her exploration of female representations. Gerwig explores themes of modern femininity, traditional gender roles and coming-of-age narratives through a uniquely modern lens. Gerwig often focuses on what it means to be a woman by exploring different people, places, ideas and emotions in her work.

Gerwig is an actress, playwright, screenwriter and director, which has allowed her to reflect on the character archetypes of people found in cinema through the decades. In her 2017 film *Lady Bird* (2017), Gerwig explores a mother–daughter relationship, conveying the subtleties and complexity of a young girl growing up and becoming a young woman. The character of Lady Bird (portrayed by Saoirse Ronan – a regular casting by Gerwig) is portrayed as a complex and emotional character, choosing to avoid her mother at all costs, rather than face her questions and interrogations, and looking

for anything that could give her a sense of identity. Conversely, her mother Marion is seen as a difficult, brash and stern woman who resembles her daughter more than she thinks.

Gerwig's film *Barbie* (2023) manipulates ideas and emotions as the entire film explores what it is to be a woman and how femininity can become a strength. In the film, 'Traditional Barbie' (portrayed by Margot Robbie – another common casting for Gerwig) is seen wrestling with her sense of self and her place in Barbie society versus human society. However, at the same time she embraces female stereotypes of beauty, perfection and gender norms. 'Traditional Barbie' becomes a representation of the internal struggle of women as they represent multiple identities.

Gerwig uses her personal style to represent different female stories across her films. Gerwig often represents her characters by focusing on the *mise en scène* around them. Costumes play a large role in representing her characters, with a focus on intricate details that give a sense of the woman behind the clothing. For example, in the *Barbie* movie, Gerwig uses various shades of pink for stereotypical Barbie, slowly removing elements of pink throughout the film to portray a more balanced and fully realised Barbie.

In *Little Women*, the four sisters are represented over time, first appearing as young girls, all the

Figure 10.17 In Greta Gerwig's 2019 adaptation of *Little Women*, she explores narratives surrounding girls becoming women and the personal journeys of her characters. Gerwig often places an emphasis on a girl's journey from child to adulthood through her various representations of women over time. Gerwig's female characters are complex and represent what it means to be a woman. Focusing on the character Jo, *Little Women* (2019) explores the relationships between the other sisters and their own journey into womanhood.

way to adulthood. Gerwig manipulates her use of costuming to show the developing nature of the girls' personalities. For example, when audiences first see Amy, she is spoilt and naïve, which is reflected in her softer palette of clothing. When she reaches adulthood, she wears darker tones representing her experience and development throughout the film.

David Fincher and representations

David Fincher is a director who has made a name for himself in creating highly dramatic and scarring films that make his audience question their own understanding of why a film needs to be entertaining at all. Fincher explores dark subject matter, often crime, murder and hidden conspiracy. Fincher enjoys exploring paranoia as a human condition and encourages audiences to question the reality of what is being seen.

Fincher's *Gone Girl* (2014) represents his protagonist Nick Dunne and his missing wife Amy Dunne as complex (and somewhat horrible) people who are both potentially capable of murder, deceit and subterfuge. They are often first portrayed on screen as the 'average' married couple with standard work attire and casual clothing. As the plot progresses and the mystery unfolds, Amy's clothing becomes more pristine and cleaner, leading audiences to question their initial assumptions.

Similarly, David Fincher represents places in his films to be dark, dank and unwelcoming, portraying the dark nature of his character's intentions and motivations in each scene. In *The Social Network* (2010), he uses dark low-key lighting and a yellow and brown filter across his shots to create the feeling of unease and mistrust among the audience.

Zodiac (2007) demonstrates Fincher's ability to create a unique style and representation of his cinematic universes. *Zodiac* is based on a true story with characters based on real events. It is mostly set in San Fransisco, but a dark, bleak interpretation of the city, with crime, death and mystery. By combining the real with the surreal, Fincher represents his people and places in a pessimistic manner, with audiences forced to face the darker and more mysterious elements in our world.

Languages

Moving-image media languages are the systems of signs, codes and conventions that create the meanings in a media text. Directors are able to manipulate these to further their artistic vision and create new ways of looking at the world.

Wes Anderson and languages

Wes Anderson is a director who manipulates technical and symbolic codes to create a unique style of his own. He incorporates technical codes within his use of cinematography, employing unique angles like the God's Eye View and camera

Figure 10.18 One of the opening shots from Wes Anderson's stop-motion film *Isle of Dogs* (2018) showing the relationship between man and dog in Megasaki prior to the dog flu outbreak. Anderson uses technical codes through his manipulation of framing and composition. Within a frame, Anderson uses symmetry to create spaces that are appealing to the eye. Anderson also manipulates elements of *mise en scène* with his use of pastel colours to create a unique and personal aesthetic.

movement such as the whip pan. Anderson is renowned for his occasional rejection of the rule of thirds, often focusing his *mise en scène* in a balanced and symmetrical way – often resulting in subjects standing directly in the centre of frame. Anderson also embraces the use of symbolic codes such as colour, creating worlds that are made up of vibrant colour palettes (reminiscent of the 1970s) and the use of title cards to create a unique and whimsical world.

Asteroid City (2023) uses technical and symbolic codes to create a unique style. Anderson meticulously crafts scenes where each camera composition looks like its own piece of art. Following various characters all attending the same bizarre event, Anderson employs long duration takes where audiences feel they are a part of the scenery and follow one group of characters to the next. He manipulates the use of colour, leaving an almost pastel colour effect on the town and their characters whose costume adds a pop of colour to the orange desert.

French Dispatch (2021) follows similar manipulations, with the camera movement and composition rejecting the rule of thirds and tracking the character's movements on and off screen. Once again following multiple narratives, Anderson implements the unique use of title cards to guide the audience through the multi-linking narratives and adds an element of whimsy to the storytelling.

Chloé Zhao and languages

Chloé Zhao is a Chinese-born filmmaker who, until recently, focused her attention on the independent film circuit. Zhao uses explorative filmmaking techniques that highlight the differences between fact and fiction. Zhao grew up in Beijing with an obsession with the American 'wild west' and she incorporates these notions into her films, reinventing the classic Western. Zhao often manipulates her technical and symbolic codes around one setting or theme and builds her entire film around it.

Nomadland (2020) focuses on a widow who leaves her life in Nevada to live as a nomad in her van. The film manipulates the technical and symbolic codes of Westerns with the natural American landscapes (filmed mostly in the western parts of the US) and the saturated colour palate of the west. She uses an almost documentarian way of filming that forges a level of intimacy with the audience.

The Eternals (2021) is a film released by Marvel and Disney. With the constraints of these two institutions, one could imagine that it would be difficult for an *auteur* to sustain their own distinct style and instead become another standard superhero film. However, Zhao manages to still implement her love of the Wild West with these godly characters fleeing to a small Western hideout of two of the characters. Here, the larger-than-life characters still have a moment of contemplation and peace that can only be represented effectively with Zhao's use of colour, sound and cinematography. The use of colour reflects that found in *Nomadland,* with a saturation and lack of vibrance that brings a sense of isolation and calm. The use (or lack of) soundtrack during these sequences also grounds this galaxy reaching film and connects the audience and characters back to their humanity and the world we live in.

Zhao consistently manipulates technical and symbolic codes to develop her own personal style. She controls colour in her films, often focusing on a bland colour scheme that feels more saturated to reflect the emotional state of the characters. She manipulates technical codes with her use of the camera, often lingering on characters with long lens shots and long duration takes to make the world feel slower and more reflective. Zhao asks audiences to patiently watch the world around them, and she edits at a slower pace to allow the themes and messages of her films to truly sink in.

FTVNM artistic vision using the key concepts

Auteur theory is one method of considering the unique style and skill behind making a film. When considering the aspects of inspiration for your own artistry, approach it from three primary elements of technologies, representations and languages to gain a full insight into the ways in which *auteurs* in particular manipulate their work. Technologies are the ways in which a director might manipulate the camera, sound, lighting and editing during the phases of production. Representations ask audiences to focus on the people, places, events ideas and emotions and how they use technical and/or symbolic codes to portray these re-presentations of the world. Finally, languages include both the technical and symbolic codes

that are manipulated by the creator to represent a thought, feeling or emotion behind the film.

10.3 ACTIVITIES

1   **Analyse** how Quentin Tarantino uses celluloid film to create a unique visual aesthetic in his films. Provide examples from *Django Unchained* (MA15+, 2012) or other works. **Research** Tarantino's philosophy regarding celluloid film and his criticism of digital filmmaking. **Examine** the visual characteristics of celluloid film, such as grain texture and colour depth, in *Django Unchained* (MA15+, 2012) or other works. **Analyse** how these visual features enhance the mood, setting and authenticity of his narratives. **Compare** the aesthetic of celluloid in Tarantino's films to digital cinematography in modern movies. **Evaluate** the extent to which the tactile nature of celluloid aligns with Tarantino's storytelling goals.

2   **Analyse** the way Chloé Zhao integrates real-life elements into her narratives to achieve realism. **Reference** *Nomadland* and *The Rider*. **Research** Zhao's methodology of casting non-professional actors and filming in real-life locations. **Identify** key scenes in *Nomadland* and *The Rider* where real-life elements are evident. **Analyse** how the integration of these elements impacts the authenticity of the characters and setting. **Describe** how this approach creates emotional connections between the audience and the story. **Evaluate** the effectiveness of Zhao's techniques in elevating her films' realism.

3   **Evaluate** how Barry Jenkins' use of cinematography enhances the emotional depth of his storytelling. **Research** the technical aspects of digital cinematography Jenkins used in one of his films. Examine specific scenes (e.g. the use of lighting and colour in the 'blue' diner scene in *Moonlight* [2016]) to identify how these elements influence mood and tone. **Analyse** how Jenkins balances visual clarity and emotional intimacy through digital tools. **Evaluate** the role of these techniques in shaping the audience's perception of the characters' journeys. **Evaluate** the extent to which Jenkins' use of cinematography contributes to the film's critical acclaim.

AUTEURS AND VIDEO GAMES ARTISTRY

Individual artistry in video game design refers to the unique creative expression and technical skill designers bring to crafting immersive, evocative game environments. The unique designs of sound and visual elements in video games emerges from not only the level of skill found in the artist, but also the degree to which the artist (and the studio) is willing to transcend conventional boundaries established by a long history of video game design.

Artistry and audio design

Artistry in gaming evolves through diverse influences like art history, cultural narratives and personal experiences, creating game environments that resonate emotionally and intellectually. The immersive power of audio becomes evident when subtle auditory cues guide player decisions, demonstrating its indispensable role in gameplay.

Audio artistry and technological impact

Technological tools enable storytelling, translating abstract concepts into experiences. For instance, advancements in 3D rendering and procedural generation allow for the creation of dynamic environments that evolve with player interactions, enriching the narrative depth. The use of technologies has allowed artists to craft a unique auditory representation that complements the narratives and themes of the game. Their artistry deepens games and enhances immersion.

Incorporating emerging technologies, such as AI-driven animation and real-time physics engines, enables designers to craft experiences that feel spontaneous and lifelike. This experimentation ensures that games remain at the forefront of interactive media. However, at no point is their experimentation beyond their skill level. Each artist utilises their artistic skill in the endeavour of designing new approaches. This implies not only a reliance *on* skill but also a development *of* skill in order to be artistic.

By experimenting with audiovisual elements and testing boundaries, artists have changed the expectations for sound in gaming. Sound now shapes story, not just supports it.

Martin Stig Andersen: *Limbo* and *Inside*

Martin Stig Andersen has built a solid reputation in the industry as an *auteur* because of his innovative sound design.

Artistic approach and experimentation

Martin Stig Andersen's work on *Limbo* and *Inside* is known for its minimalist yet uncanny audio design that supports the ambiguous tone of these games. Andersen avoids conventional musical scores, using organic foley and industrial or mechanical sounds to build upon the game's tension. With *Inside*, Andersen recorded sounds using human bones (called 'bone conduction') to lean into a form of cognitive dissonance. The result was unnerving because it is not a sound commonly encountered in real life.

Use of technology

Andersen is highly experimental, utilising techniques like binaural recording and unconventional sampling to create a mixture of familiar and unfamiliar sounds. His use of bone conduction recording in *Inside* involved capturing sounds transmitted through human bones, giving them a unique texture that plays with gamers on a subliminal level. This process, paired with ambient sound manipulation, defines the game's audio fingerprint.

Artistry and visual design

Individual artistry in video game visual design is the unique approach that a game designer brings to crafting a game's visual aesthetics. Artists experiment with *mise en scène* elements like colour, lighting and composition. They use animation and effects to innovate and create immersive worlds.

Visual artistry and technological impact

Advanced tools like digital painting and 3D modelling connect artistic ideas with gameplay. These visual effects demonstrate that visual design can rely heavily on aesthetics to encourage opportunities for player immersion.

Innovative use of technologies

Artists use technology in ways that prioritise their unique vision and push visual storytelling to be a dominant element of game design. It is important to note that the balance in this relationship – between technology and artistic skill – is not a matter of simply using technology's tools. Each artist brings artisanal skill to the table, so technology adopts a supportive role in creating the aesthetic design.

Broader influence on game art

The innovative approaches of video game artists have had a significant influence on both mainstream and Indie game aesthetics. Designers are learning by example, using these leading artists to access ways to push visual art as an experimental storytelling tool in game design. By experimenting with visual elements such as colour, texture and visual effects, artists show that a game's visual style can create memorable experiences that resonate with gamers on an emotional level. The visual experience is perhaps as crucial as gameplay.

Jen Zee: *Bastion, Transistor, Hades*

Jen Zee is an art director for Supergiant Games. Her work has not only established the company's look in the industry, but has also influenced how games are marketed to the consumer base.

Artistic approach and experimentation

Jen Zee has a distinct paintbrush style that emphasises rich colour palettes in combination with dynamic lighting and symbolism. Her work on *Bastion* (2011), *Pyre* (2017) and *Hades II* (2024) is characterised by vibrant colours and detailed hand-painted environments, giving each game a unique art-inspired look. Zee's use of colour is not only aesthetic but also symbolic, using warm or cool tones to reflect emotional shifts and thematic undertones to match the narrative.

Use of technology

Zee combines hand-painted brushstrokes with digital software, such as Adobe Photoshop and Unity, to bring unique aesthetics to the game's visuals. Her process involves creating layered, digitally rendered paintings that she carefully integrates into 3D game environments. For example, in *Hades,* her use of glow effects and particle systems in post-production significantly alters the art aesthetic, emphasising the game's

supernatural, mythological setting. Zee uses lighting and colour to enhance mood, atmosphere and emotional resonance.

Surrealism and artistry

Surrealism in video games transcends mere aesthetics, functioning as a bridge between the player's subconscious and the game's narrative themes. By juxtaposing the familiar with the uncanny, designers create a dialogue that challenges conventional notions of reality within the gaming space.

As an art movement, Surrealism emerged in the early 20th century, and focused on exploring the subconscious, dreams and irrationality of the mind through unexpected juxtapositions, distorted realities and abstract imagery. This art movement became highly influential and has shaped various visual and media elements in contemporary video games.

Surrealism in video games functions as a bridge between the player's subconscious and the game's narrative, blending dreamlike visuals with evocative soundscapes to create deeply immersive experiences. By combining abstract shapes, vibrant colours and rhythmic audio, Mizuguchi evokes emotional responses that transcend traditional gameplay.

This integration of surrealist aesthetics has inspired the broader gaming industry to reimagine immersion, using non-linear storytelling and experimental design to challenge player expectations. The legacy of surrealism in gaming continues to grow, as more designers adopt its principles to craft games that provoke thought and emotional resonance.

Tetsuya Mizuguchi and surrealism: *Rez* and *Tetris Effect*

Pioneering designers such as Tetsuya Mizuguchi have exemplified the surrealist approach through works such as *Rez* (2001), *Tetris Effect* (2018) and *Humanity* (2023), which emphasise sensory engagement over realism. Mizuguchi's integration of surrealist aesthetics and emerging technologies has set a precedent for sensory-driven gaming.

Surrealist influence and artistic approach

Tetsuya Mizuguchi's work engages players through visual, auditory and even synesthetic (multiple perception/sensory) dimensions. In *Rez* and *Tetris Effect*, Mizuguchi uses abstract visuals and rhythmic audio to engage players emotionally. His approach focuses less on realistic depictions and more on exploring emotional responses through a blend of surreal visual art and sound design. His designs reflect surrealism's goal of transcending reality and tapping the subconscious.

Use of technology and post-production

Mizuguchi uses virtual reality (VR), graphics processing and music synchronisation for multi-sensory experiences. In *Tetris Effect*, he employs real-time lighting effects, particle systems and reactive audio to make visual elements respond dynamically to player actions. His use of post-production techniques, such as synchronised lighting and animated textures, enhances the sensory feedback loop, creating an unconventional feeling of unity between the player and the strangeness of the game.

10.4 ACTIVITIES

1   How does Martin Stig Andersen's use of human bone conduction in *Inside* impact the game's unsettling atmosphere? **Research** Andersen's technique of recording sounds using bone conduction. Play *Inside* or view gameplay footage to identify specific moments where these sounds are prominent. **Describe** the auditory textures and how they deviate from conventional soundscapes. **Analyse** how these textures enhance the game's eerie tone and contribute to the player's emotional engagement. **Evaluate** whether this technique complements or disrupts the narrative flow.

2   How does Jen Zee's use of colour symbolism in *Hades* reflect emotional shifts and enhance the narrative? **Identify** key scenes in *Hades* where colour is prominently used (e.g. the Underworld vs Mount Olympus). **Examine** how warm and cool tones are applied to characters, settings and gameplay events. **Analyse** the relationship between these colours and the emotional or thematic shifts in the narrative. **Evaluate** how Zee's approach to colour symbolism enriches the storytelling and player immersion.

3   How does Tetsuya Mizuguchi integrate surrealist principles into gameplay mechanics in *Tetris Effect*? **Define** the core surrealist principles (e.g. abstraction, dreamlike sequences, sensory engagement). Play or view gameplay footage of *Tetris Effect* to identify these principles in visual and auditory design. **Analyse** specific mechanics, such as synchronised visuals and audio, and how they create a transcendent experience. **Evaluate** how these principles contribute to the game's immersive and emotional impact.

SPACED PRACTICE

Weblink
Trailer for
WINHANGANHA

Resource
Scaffolding

Stimulus: Trailer for *WINHANGANHA* by Jazz Money + National Film and Sound Archive (Australia, 2023).

Contextual information: *WINHANGANHA* was created by Wiradjuri artist, Jazz Money, for the National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA) in Australia. The film looks at how the sounds and images nations choose to archive affects contemporary representations and realities, and how the lens was usually directed by a colonial gaze. The artist uses footage from the NFSA to examine the history of Australia from a First Nations perspective. In Wiradjuri language, 'winhanganha' means remember/know/think.

WINHANGANHA contains images of deceased Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Question (Key concept – Representations): Analyse the artistry of *WINHANGANHA*, in terms of stylistic features and conventional practices challenged in the film's trailer. **Evaluate** the effectiveness of the trailer for *WINHANGANHA* in communicating the style and intent of the film to the audience. **Justify** your viewpoint, also considering the contexts of production and use.

11 Narrative film movements and artistry

NARRATIVE FILM MOVEMENTS

A film movement is a group of films bound by a shared artistic approach in terms of technologies, languages and representations. Often, a film movement is based in a country, as it is a reflection of the contexts of production and use of that time or place.

Whether or not a film belongs to a particular film movement or 'wave' of cinematic work is often a decision made retrospectively by film critics or academics. *Film noir*, for example, is a retrospective label given to a group of films that reflect a specific mood and aesthetic, shaped by the **zeitgeist** of the Second World War and its aftermath. However, it is possible for moving-image media artists to draw artistic influence from the features and characteristics of a specific film movement, or to set out to create a movement through articulating a manifesto (as in Dogme 95), and therefore deliberately seek to create a film that belongs to that movement.

What is a narrative film movement?

Understanding film movements and criteria for categorisations helps when discussing films, artistry and purposeful use of languages, technologies and representations. According to film academics David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, whether or not a film belongs to a film movement depends on two criteria.

1 **Does the film share features and characteristics of other films from a particular time period or nation?** For example, consider any Hong Kong martial arts film made between 1979 and 1989. If it is similar to other Hong Kong films of the 1980s, then it may be part of the 'Hong Kong New Wave'.
2 **Do the filmmakers share a belief about what makes a good film with a circle of other filmmakers who work in a similar system?** For example, after 1945, a group of French film writers discussed good and bad films, and then went out and filmed their own. Their films became part of the 'French New Wave'. Their ideas and writing still influence filmmakers today.

Resource
Key concept test

Experimentation creating new movements

Throughout the history of moving-image media, the form of filmmaking has been progressed by products that are innovative and expressive with representations and languages. Most have resonated with an individual, social or cultural identity, which has served to give the product momentum, universality and timelessness.

Central to innovation and expression is the concept of experimentation. No scientist has proved a theory without experimentation. Similarly, no moving-image maker has innovated without experimenting with languages, technologies or representations.

To make deliberate selections of languages and technologies and thus construct work that meaningfully aligns with a representation requires understanding of **traditional** or mainstream languages, representations and technologies in moving-image media.

Moving-image media has traditionally been made using two key elements: 'the shot' (languages) and 'the cut' (technologies). With shots and cuts, we can tell narrative stories through constructing representations of places, people, ideas and emotions.

How stylistic movements create aesthetic traditions

Stylistic film movements introduced innovations such as jump cuts, handheld cameras and non-linear storytelling, pushing the boundaries of conventional

film language. These innovations, throughout the past century of filmmaking, have been adopted by moving-image media artists beyond the movement and, through such use, have become traditions in visual language or aesthetics in filmmaking.

Italian neorealism, for instance, pioneered location shooting and non-professional actors to highlight real-world social issues, while German Expressionism birthed the use of exaggerated lighting and set designs to evoke psychological themes.

French New Wave films such as Jean-Luc Goddard's *Breathless* (1960) used unconventional techniques such as jump cuts, breaking the fourth wall, handheld camerawork and fragmented narrative structures that created a sense of spontaneity and freedom reflective of the rebellious spirit of the postwar era. The French New Wave's spontaneous visuals challenged the polished, studio-bound productions typical of the time, and created an aesthetic tradition of handheld, location-based camera work that has transcended the movement.

11.1 ACTIVITIES

1 **Research** film movements and **create** a mind map to show the connections between each movement.
2 Use the information in this chapter, and from your research, to **identify** the aesthetic traditions of interest to your own filmmaking style that have emerged from film movements.

TWENTIETH CENTURY NARRATIVE FILM MOVEMENTS

A narrative film tells a story using a chain of events in a cause-effect relationship within a particular setting. While this may sound straight-forward, there are many different styles of storytelling in moving-image media. Classical Hollywood narrative is the most common.

The history of film narrative is also a history of many other ways of expressing stories. Different trends and styles of storytelling have

Weblinks
Soviet montage theory

Who is Sergei Eisenstein?

emerged at different times in history and in different countries.

Film movements are often begun by filmmakers or critics who discuss different ways of conceptualising film narratives. Their ideas are shaped by the surrounding context of the region or the times, but they often have much broader influence. Following are the most aesthetically influential narrative film movements in cinema history.

Soviet montage cinema

Soviet montage cinema was a film movement in Russia during the 1920s that developed using an editing technique called **montage**. Editing styles developed in the early Soviet cinema are still used in most modern films.

Soviet montage cinema is based on the experiments of Lev Kuleshov. In one experiment in his film workshop, Kuleshov edited together camera shots of an actor's face with shots of a bowl of soup. Audiences assumed that the man was looking at the soup and was hungry. In a later experiment he cut together separate shots of a Russian man in Moscow pointing, the White House in Washington, DC, and the steps of a church in Moscow. Audiences concluded that the man was in Washington pointing at the White House and about to walk up its steps. This false connection created in the minds of the audience is called the Kuleshov effect. The idea underpins all modern editing.

Sergei Eisenstein used Kuleshov's findings to come up with his own ideas about **collision of images** or montage. Eisenstein believed that if one shot was 'collided' or juxtaposed with a conflicting shot, the audience could infer a third meaning. For instance, when a shot of a man holding his shoulder is collided with a shot of a gun being fired, audiences will commonly derive a third meaning (which is not shown in either shot): that the man has been hit by a bullet.

Eisenstein's collision of images idea was a product of his culture – revolutionary communist Russia. The idea was based on the Marxist theory of the dialectic, one of the foundations of communist thinking. The dialectic theory states that when opposite forces of history clash, they create a third way that is new and different from either.

Films of the Soviet montage cinema

The best-known examples of Soviet montage are shown in Table 11.1.

Table 11.1 Soviet montage films

SOVIET MONTAGE FILM	DETAILS
Battleship Potemkin (1924)	Sergei Eisenstein's film is based on the true story of a mutiny on board the *Potemkin* in Saint Petersburg in 1905. The Tsar's soldiers later opened fire on the ship and its supporters on shore. The use of collision of images in the 'Odessa Steps' sequence (see *Nelson Film, Television & New Media, QCE Units 1 & 2*, Chapter 6, page 83) makes the scene the most famous example of editing technique in cinema history, with the exception of the shower scene in *Psycho* (1960).
The End of St. Petersburg (1926)	Images of soldiers dying in the muddy trenches of the First World War are intercut with shots of the share market in Saint Petersburg in Vsevolod Pudovkin's film. The point is made that the war was for the profit of capitalists.

Features of Soviet montage cinema

Key elements of representations and languages in early Soviet filmmaking include:

- **Editing for emotions.** Soviet cinema used innovative editing techniques to manipulate the emotions of the audience. Collision of images (A + B = C) editing was used by Eisenstein. Linkage editing (A + B = AB) was used by Vsevolod Pudovkin.
- **Types, not stars.** Communist philosophy favoured the action of groups over that of individuals. Soviet films of the time did not have individual film stars. *Battleship Potemkin*, for instance, does not have a main character. Instead, the film focuses on types of people – those who are typical of and can be used to represent a group. A **protagonist** appears in some films but only as a representative of a group.
- **Social forces, not individual stories.** In keeping with early communist thinking, Soviet films do not have narratives that focus strongly on individual lives. Instead, stories are about groups of people who take collective action. Events in the story are not motivated by the individual actions of the hero.

Technologies in this movement of film are closely connected to the experimentation with and use of editing techniques. By placing two unrelated images together, filmmakers were able to build

sequences that featured dual meanings, and in many cases symbolic suggestions. This was often called **dialectic montage**.

German Expressionism

German Expressionism was a style of film production that emerged in Germany after the First World War (1914–18) and continued into the mid-1920s.

Like the expressionist movement in visual art, expressionist films sought to convey human emotion and feeling rather than to depict conventional reality. One of the most famous expressionist works of art is Edvard Munch's *The Scream* (1893). Just as that painting uses a distorted image to express human feeling, German Expressionist film used distorted narratives, sets and *mise en scène* to show emotional truths.

Several factors contributed to the decline of the movement and its disappearance by the early 1930s. The collapse of the Weimar Republic and the rise of Hitler's Nazi Party led to censorship and stronger controls over filmmakers. The persecution of Jewish people, artists and intellectuals forced many to leave Germany. Large numbers of filmmakers migrated to Hollywood in the 1930s, and they took their style of filmmaking with them. Expressionism reappeared as an influence on American **film noir** (see *Nelson Film, Television & New Media, QCE Units 1 & 2*, page 262) and horror (see *Nelson Film, Television & New Media, QCE Units 1 & 2*, page 263).

German Expressionist films

The best-known examples of German Expressionism are listed in Table 11.2.

Weblink
German Expressionism

Table 11.2 German Expressionist films

GERMAN EXPRESSIONIST FILM	DETAILS
The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1919)	Robert Wiene's film is the first and one of the most famous German Expressionist films. A psychotic hypnotist uses a murderous zombie to kidnap a beautiful woman.
Nosferatu (1921)	F.W. Murnau's film was one of the first vampire films to feature Count Dracula. Later, Murnau moved to Hollywood.
Metropolis (1926)	Fritz Lang's film is set in the year 2000. An inventor creates an evil girl to incite a revolt in a futuristic city. Lang fled Germany and moved to Hollywood in 1935, leaving behind his pro-Nazi wife.

Features of German Expressionism

Representations in German Expressionist films are highly stylised and unrealistic looking. They have many of the following features in common:

- **Settings and** *mise en scène.* Bizarre and odd-looking settings with distorted buildings create a disturbing impression that seems the stuff of nightmares rather than reality. *Mise en scène* is an important off-balance element in these films. Objects are misshapen or exaggerated in appearance.
- **Characters and actors.** People in these movies are often eccentric or even mentally ill. Actors are heavily made up and their whitened faces and dark lips give them a ghoulish appearance. Characters move with odd jerky actions or overly fluid, floppy gestures. The actors' bodies are part of the graphic design. They seem to be part of the landscape or artistic backdrop – and every bit as weird!

The way in which set design functioned is one way of thinking about technologies. Sets were uniquely designed in accordance with the general mindset of German Expressionism – strange shapes for even stranger stories. For many scholars, the set was a physical expression of a psychological subtext in the story. Much of the work was highly innovative for the time, which gave the body of work more value.

German Expressionism used newly developing film language techniques to enhance the style of the productions.

- **Camera work.** The camera uses unusual angles to create the feeling that the world is off balance. There is very little depth in the focal length. Everything appears to be two-dimensional, which is the opposite of Hollywood's deep focus.
- **Lighting.** *Chiaroscuro* or high-contrast lighting is preferred. A shaft of light illuminates the action while deep shadows surround it. This type of lighting is also called **low key**.
- **Narratives.** The subject matter of German Expressionist films often concerns unnatural acts or disturbed psychologies. Gothic horror is also a common theme.

Figure 11.2 A scene from *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919). German Expressionist films used odd angles and perspectives, and unusual proportions to express an emotional state rather than portray a realistic view of the world.

Moviestore Collection Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo

Realism

More than other media, film is seen as the medium of **realism**. This is because audiences believe the camera reproduces what is 'there' and audiences used to say, 'the camera does not lie!' Nowadays we know better, but the desire for realism in cinema has never gone away.

The aim of realism is to capture on camera life as it really is. This may sound simple, but it causes much argument. What does a film have to do to be 'real'? More film movements have been born out of the question of what is real than out of any other debate in cinema history. The growth of digital effects and computer-generated imagery only intensifies the arguments.

A realist film aims to project onto the screen actual experience as it is lived by the characters

'Film is truth at 24 frames per second.'
'Cinema is the most beautiful fraud in the world.'
'Cinema is not the reflection of reality, but the reality of the reflection.'

Jean-Luc Godard, French New Wave director and critic

in their own environment. The film convinces its audience that it is presenting a direct and truthful view of life in the real world. A realist fiction film is a drama that seems to be true to life. A realist documentary captures life experience as it happens in front of the camera, as in *cinéma vérité*.

Types of realism

Two main types of filmic realism have been identified:

- **Seamless realism.** The purpose of seamless realism is to hide from the audience any sense that things are 'just made up'. The construction, sets, camera work and editing all conspire to make you think that what you see is real. There should be no visible joins or 'seams' stitching the different elements together. Most Hollywood movies take this approach.
- **Aesthetic or artistic realism.** Aesthetic realist directors try to make the film 'super-real' – for example, by replacing actors with authentic non-professionals. Sometimes a director will purposely let the audience know that the film is a construction; a jump cut might be deliberately inserted, for instance. The idea behind this is usually to allow the audience greater flexibility to make their own decisions about how much 'reality' the movie has captured.

Features of realism

There is limited agreement among film writers as to what constitutes realism. However, many agree on the following four aspects of representations within realism.

1 **Surface reality.** The film needs to look real to convince the audience to **suspend disbelief**. Period dramas, for example, need to look authentic, with nothing out of place that could disrupt the realism. Some directors go to extraordinary lengths to achieve authenticity. To film *All the President's Men* (1976), the entire newsroom of *The Washington Post* newspaper was re-created in a film studio and included the scattering of original waste paper from the *Post*'s office!

2 **Realistic acting and characters.** The actors' inner emotions need to be believable. In the Australian war film *Kokoda* (2006), realism is achieved when the actors allow us to feel what it must have been like to have been there fighting in the jungles of New Guinea. But for some of the Second World War generation watching this film, realism was disrupted when the soldiers' language was considered too modern (see also *Kokoda Front Line* (1942)).

3 **Plausibility.** A film will be accepted as realistic if it coincides with generally accepted ideas about what is and is not believable. For example, the plot of the film should not have too many unbelievable coincidences. What the audience will accept as believable determines the standard. For instance, if 70 per cent of people say they do not believe in ghosts, then a film about ghosts cannot be a realist film – irrespective of whether or not ghosts exist.

4 **Technical and symbolic codes.** Films use technical and symbolic codes to communicate meaning. Over time, audiences have come to accept certain codes as realistic. For instance, we accept music playing in the background. However, in a realist film, we might not accept fades to white because they tend to represent dreams or other unreal experiences. Similarly, we might question certain lens filters or colour saturations.

Aesthetic realism

Aesthetic realism may have some of the following features (in addition to those previously discussed):

- **Locations, not studios.** Many directors make a point of shooting only on location and never using studios.
- **Natural lighting.** Hollywood studio lighting, traditional three-point lighting, is abandoned in favour of natural lighting with its shadows and imperfections.
- **Non-professional actors.** Certain aesthetic realists choose their actors from people in the street. Their reasoning is that it brings greater authenticity. Says director Bruno Dumont, 'I choose actors who resemble the characters I've written. I take their physique, I take their psychology. I don't need to discuss with them if they understand the character.'
- **Real-life camera.** Some realist directors place cameras at random and then edit footage based on what they have been lucky enough to capture. What happens on film is left to chance. The Italian movie *Rome, Open City* (1946) tells of the Italian resistance's struggles with the Gestapo

in occupied Rome. The film uses footage of life in Rome, filmed in secret, just as the Nazis are leaving and the city is liberated. The shots are of streets filled with a mixture of exhausted and demoralised citizens and panicking German soldiers.

- **Unmediated shots and deep focus.** It is common for realist films to use a lot of long shots and long takes of these shots. This demonstrates the authenticity of the scene because the illusions created by editing are reduced to a minimum. **Deep focus** (see *Nelson Film, Television & New Media, QCE Units 1 & 2*, page 56) is used because it resembles the natural focusing power of the human eye.

Italian neorealism

Italian neorealism first appeared in the mid-1940s, and the movement remained popular until the mid-1950s. The movement came to an end partly because the government film sponsorship body refused to fund films that might give Italy a bad name.

Neorealism was a reaction against the Fascist domination of the film industry under the dictator Benito Mussolini. An ally of Hitler, Mussolini used propaganda techniques in much the same way as Nazi Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels did. When the US liberated Italy in 1944, filmmakers found a new freedom to tell the truth about life.

Features of neo-realism

Neo-realist filmmakers felt they had a mission – to produce films that told audiences about the harsh realities of life in modern society. Representations in Italian neo-realism are honest and critically mirror the society of the time. Their films had the following characteristics:

- **'Slice of life'.** The Italian filmmakers believed their films should focus on everyday life and give audiences a taste of what it was like to live in the cities of Italy as the war ended.
- **Natural dialogue.** To reflect life as it was, people should talk naturally without the advantage of clever scriptwriting that could hide the real message. Often, people 'just talked' in these films, even improvising at times.

- **Non-professional actors.** To capture ordinary life, Italian directors dispensed with highly paid actors and instead recruited non-professional actors.
- **Location shooting.** Even though the films are fiction, the directors used documentary-style location shooting with random camera placement and sometimes even handheld cameras. Lighting is natural and without the benefit of studio lights.

Technologies in production suffered a process of reduction so that only certain basics were used. Amateur actors were employed for films, but they did not step out onto a staged area: sets were the available local spaces. Lighting was dismantled, as were other 'unneeded' technologies such as second or third cameras. The omission of technologies in this cinematic space was an attempt at drawing closer connections to reality.

Neorealist films

The most widely available and best-known Italian neorealist film is Vittorio De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves* (1948). It is the story of a poor man whose job is putting up posters around the city. When his bicycle is stolen, he and his young son begin a search for it. The film is about the father–son relationship, and also the causes of poverty and despair in postwar Italy.

Figure 11.3 *Bicycle Thieves (1948)*, also known as *The Bicycle Thief (1948)*, was one of the most influential European films of the immediate postwar era. It demonstrates most of the attributes of Italian neorealism.

French New Wave

The **French New Wave** (also called French *Nouvelle Vague*) was a youth-oriented film movement that came about when an influx of young directors took over from France's old-style movie makers in the late 1950s. About 170 new directors came onto the scene at this time. At least half of them had no previous film experience, so they broke all the old rules. With so many new filmmakers, funding was spread thinly, so their movies were nearly all made on very low budgets.

Several of the most famous directors were young film critics who worked for the magazine *Cahiers du cinéma* (*Cinema Papers*). Having begun writing about films, they decided to make their own. As a result, many French New Wave films are experimental and very intellectual. Best known among these critics-turned-directors are Jean-Luc Godard and François Truffaut.

The French New Wave had two stages: the first wave (1958–1962) and the second wave (1966–1968). The second wave was very political. It coincided with the student demonstrations and riots across France that almost came to a revolution in 1968.

Features of French New Wave

The French New Wave became a major international influence in filmmaking. French New Wave movies typically have the following characteristics:

- **Inexpensive and democratic.** The expensive sound stages and studio post-production of the old cinema were seen as belonging to *cinéma de papa* (old fogey cinema). The new directors shot films quickly on cheap, portable equipment.
- **Disjointed stories.** The narratives of French New Wave movies often lack a clear ending and sometimes even a beginning. The directors rejected the old storytelling techniques. The characters in these movies are complex and serious young people wandering around 1960s France.
- **Broken codes.** Many of the long-established codes and conventions of the cinema were challenged by the French New Wave. The editing style was very fast. Traditional seamless editing was abandoned. **Jump cuts** were purposely inserted. Even **establishing shots** were often left out.

Technologies in the French New Wave movement were more associated with accessibility and aesthetics. The invention of portable, handheld cameras changed the ways in which storytelling functioned. Cinematographers could now find access to spaces that were previously too difficult for a larger rig, expanding the scope of narrative and changing the kinds of stories being told.

French New Wave films also have characteristic use of film language and cinematic styling. They often played with audience expectations. They made little effort to get the audience to suspend disbelief and even actively reminded the audience that this was a film.

French New Wave films

Jean-Luc Godard's movie *Breathless* (1959) is regarded as one of the best examples of French New Wave. It is the story of a young delinquent in Paris who falls in love with a visiting American student. Towards the end of the movie, she betrays him to the police. Filmed in the same year, and also featuring a young petty criminal, was François Truffaut's *The 400 Blows* (1959).

Weblink
French New Wave

British New Wave

The **British New Wave** was a movement in the British social realism tradition. It dealt with the issues of the early 1960s: rising youth culture, changing sexual values and changes in music and fashion. It also focused on the difficulties of ordinary life for working-class people in postwar Britain. The British New Wave developed in 1958 and continued until Hollywood's export push into Britain decimated the local film industry in the mid-1960s.

The British New Wave movement grew out of the 'kitchen sink' drama movement of the mid-1950s. A group of writers called the 'angry young men' wrote gritty plays about working-class people and the dramas of their domestic lives. They angrily expressed the disappointment of a generation of people who had come of age during or just after the war. The promised new society was failing to deliver. That wouldn't come until the 'Swinging Sixties' and the era of the Beatles.

The British New Wave was controversial by the standards of the 1950s and early 1960s. For the

first time in British film, characters had intimate relationships and financial worries, and faced major social problems. Themes included workplace bullying, unhappy marriages, runaway teenagers, the urban poor and depression.

A typical protagonist was a young working-class male. As traditional industries closed down and the old working-class culture was lost, the hero had to cope as best he could and find a new identity and a new way of living.

British New Wave films

Some important films in the British New Wave movement are discussed in Table 11.3.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the concerns of the British New Wave found new relevance. With the restructuring of traditional British industry and coalmine closures, many working-class people lost their jobs and their hopes for the future. Two movies were made in the style of British New Wave during this time: *Brassed Off* (1996) and *The Full Monty (1997).*

Table 11.3 British New Wave films

BRITISH NEW WAVE FILM	DETAILS
Room at the Top (1959)	Based on John Braine's novel, this film tells the story of an ambitious young man who seeks to escape his working-class background in a bleak northern factory town.
Look Back in Anger (1959)	This film was based on the play (and early experiences) of another of the 'angry young men', John Osborne. It is about working-class life and class friction in a dreary one-bedroom Midlands flat.
The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner (1962)	While running a race against a team from an exclusive private school, a borstal (British reform school) boy thinks about his depressing, poverty-stricken life, comparing it with their privileged lives.

Figure 11.4 Unemployed former steel workers decide to perform a male striptease act in *The Full Monty* (1997). The British New Wave was a film movement of the 1950s and early 1960s whose style and concerns were echoed in the new wave of British films of the 1990s.

Moviestore Collection Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo

Most early British New Wave films were shot in black and white to place emphasis on the serious and artistic nature of the work. Termed 'pseudo-documentary', these films used black and white to create a gritty tone that felt like historical record. It qualified unfolding action in a more engaging manner.

Classical Hollywood narrative

Classical Hollywood narrative films have plots that progress through time in a linear way, are based on character-driven action and use the continuity editing style (see *Nelson Film, Television and New Media, QCE Units 1 & 2,* page 82).

The style is classical because it is based on the classical principles of literature and art. A work is described as classical if it has perfect balance and symmetry. It must also be clear, simple and free of excesses of emotionalism or irrelevant detail. From beginning to end, all elements must be integrated, and the resulting sense of harmony should reassure and satisfy the audience.

Features of classical Hollywood narrative

The Hollywood style takes advantage of the contract people make with the filmmaker when they pay for

'Classical Hollywood cinema possesses a style which is largely invisible and difficult for the average spectator to see. The narrative is delivered so effortlessly and efficiently to the audience that it appears to have no source. It comes magically off the screen.'

John Belton, film scholar and Professor of English at Rutgers University

their ticket: they willingly want to suspend disbelief. Although people know it is tomato sauce, they really want to believe it is blood. In a conspiracy with the audience to make movies believable, classical Hollywood narrative has developed the following features:

- **Three-act narrative.** Hollywood plots are set out according to the three-act structure of orientation, complication and resolution (see *Nelson Film, Television & New Media, QCE Units 1 & 2*, page 223). A situation is presented, a disruption is introduced and then the resolution ties everything up in a strong closure. Real life is not so simple, and actual events rarely have such neat starts or finishes. Even so, the word **realism** can be applied to Hollywood style because it is based on classic literary narrative realism.

- **Objective storytelling.** The audience in a Hollywood film knows more than the characters do. We are able to see what is happening in other places at the same time, and we can see what other characters are doing. In this respect we are God-like – we can see everything. This makes the style of storytelling objective, according to film academics David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson. It also allows us to accept **simultaneous time** or parallel editing (see *Nelson Film, Television & New Media, QCE Units 1 & 2*, pages 83 and 242).

- **Character driven.** The US style of cinema is almost exclusively concerned with individual characters (and stars). This contrasts sharply with the Soviet montage style of filmmaking. The objective of the Hollywood movie is to relate to what happens to the characters and whether or not they get what they wanted. The films have strong individual characters who struggle to fulfil their hopes and goals. These characters are arranged in a hierarchy, from hero or protagonist to antagonist and then down to minor characters and supporting cast.

   While earthquakes, alien invasions or cyborgs may act as catalysts to events, the stories generally focus on the personal choices of individuals, say Bordwell and Thompson. To confirm this point, Susan Hayward gives the example of Vietnam War movies. Many movies take an anti-war stance, but in Hollywood movies we learn about the impact of the war only by seeing how it affects our main 'G.I. Joe' character. Only a few other surrounding characters suffer. We don't get to see how the war affected society, or what caused the war, or what its long-term effects were. Even if a cause for a war is proposed, it tends to be marked down as the responsibility of one individual. For example, in Hollywood movies, Hitler is shown to be solely responsible for the Second World War.

- *Mise en scène.* One of the most important aspects of Hollywood style is the *mise en scène*, the sole function of which is to manufacture realism.

- **Time and space.** Hollywood movies have a strong sense of movement – either through time or through geography. The story movement through time most often follows a straightforward line of episodic events. Flashbacks or flash-forwards may be used, but the overall linear direction is strongly maintained. Whether through time or space, movement is totally subordinate to the action, say Bordwell and Thompson. Only the bits that are important to the story are shown.

- **Classical continuity editing.** A typical feature film has between 800 and 1200 shots. Editing is designed to render all these shot changes invisible or imperceptible. Editing in the invisible style serves to hide any jumps or discontinuities that would alert the viewer to 'non-reality'.

   Most people are very familiar with classical Hollywood films. Examples include timely classics such as *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946) and *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1961), and musicals such as *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) and *Singin' in the Rain* (1952). Contemporary examples include blockbuster films such as the *Star Wars* franchise.

   In general, narrative representations in classical Hollywood were constructed through continuity editing that relied quite heavily on match-on-action. This is a simple editing process where an action in one shot is matched to the action of the following shot, so that the transition of action across the edit point appears consistent and seamless. One way to think about technologies is through editing and multi-camera shooting. Multi-camera shooting enabled continuity to function across shots more efficiently, making the editing process much quicker.

New Hollywood

New Hollywood presented stories that were wildly popular because they had never been seen before. Its chief films included *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), *The Graduate* (1967), *Easy Rider* (1969) and *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969). New Hollywood marked the end of the studio system, and the rise of new approaches to representation and spectacle.

In some ways a response to the social upheaval of the time, New Hollywood refers to a film movement that began in the early 1960s and lasted for over a decade. It is qualified by changes to industry context, particularly the removal of the studio system's power, along with the rise of the director's creative vision as a key function of visual storytelling. As a result, New Hollywood is viewed by many critics as a shift in the style of filmmaking.

Creative vision was not a prescribed mandate of New Hollywood film production. Nor does it imply that earlier film directors were not capable of some kind of creative vision in their own productions. Under the new system, creative vision experienced more flexibility and was therefore realised in dynamic new ways because studio system's controls had been stripped away. Executive producers and their respective studios no longer controlled filmmaking in the same way – it was almost as if directors were given free rein over production. Thus, creative vision became a by-product of industrial contexts of the time, and amazing new visual imagery began to surface.

Creative vision affected cinema in multiple ways. Firstly, representations were grounded in a strict kind of realism. Narrative structure suffered significant change, particularly in the manner of endings. For many years, Hollywood had produced a number of films whose narratives were informed by romanticised endings. The protagonist always achieved their goals – happy endings were common, as was marriage and fruitful relationships.

In response to this, New Hollywood stories were shaped more by reality than idealism. Lead characters experienced disillusionment, failure and even died in some cases. The moral integrity of lead characters was also subject to change. The cowboy characters in Westerns, such as those played by John Wayne, gave way to characters who expressed uncertainty, doubt and even violence. *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid (1969)* is a good example of

Photo 12/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.5 The iconic final moments of the film *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969) where the two protagonists race out of a saloon to face the Bolivian army. Instead of surviving against insurmountable odds, as in older, romanticised Hollywood films, the two lead characters die instantly. Viewers are left contemplating this cold, hard reality.

displacing romanticised endings in narrative. Where conventional Hollywood film would have seen the heroes survive against incredible odds, the characters in this film died at the end – because reality demanded it.

Another way in which creative vision affected New Hollywood film production was at the level of film style. New Hollywood style has been described as a departure from the classical system of Hollywood narrative filmmaking. What this means is that Hollywood conventions such as continuity editing are intentionally displaced in preference for new and interesting visual designs. Final cut privilege was often handed over to directors who then experimented with the flow of story. Spectacle came to more prominence and served to interrupt narrative coherence so that viewers could luxuriate in spectacular big-screen experiences. Breaches in continuity editing (largely inspired by French New Wave) became more common in the process of storytelling via techniques such as rapid-cutting or experimenting with montage.

One of the many ways in which technologies were used in New Hollywood films is special effects. The importance of special effects became paramount because of the growing emphasis placed on spectacle as a means to tell story. Large explosions, buildings collapsing, stunt tricks and performances – all of these developing technologies became more valuable. New Hollywood filmmakers came to realise this importance and shaped their production practice around the use of effects.

Dogma 95

Dogma 95 (*Dogme* in Danish) is a radical film movement originating in Denmark in 1995. In Paris, at the celebrations for the 100th anniversary of motion pictures, the Danish director Lars von Trier announced the rules for Dogma 95 films. These rules were referred to as the filmmaker's 'Vow of Chastity'.

The Dogma 95 film movement is a kind of anti-Hollywood movement that sets out to do the reverse of what is expected in classical Hollywood narrative films. All the techniques of the Hollywood style are regarded as 'cosmetics' that hide the truth and turn films into mindless entertainment.

Audiences of Dogma 95 films cannot ignore the fact that films are constructed. Whereas Hollywood uses the invisible style to hide the 'machinery' of filmmaking, Dogma 95 films put the machinery on show. 'Dogma 95 is very visible in that it disappoints audience expectations and prevents automatised reception,' says the Danish academic Ove Christensen.

Dogma 95 had a strict approach to the use of technologies. Cameras were permitted, but virtually everything else included in film production technologies were abandoned in favour of a particular approach to film. Instead of relying on three-point lighting, for example, available light sources such as the room light were used. If the lighting was not enough, then production had a choice – proceed anyway or find another location.

Dogma 95 films

Very few films in the movement have managed to conform to all the dictates of the Dogma 95 manifesto. Between 40 and 80 films that follow at least some of the rules are believed to have been made worldwide. However, most of these are not available in Australia. Films that are available and give some idea of the movement are listed in Table 11.4.

Table 11.4 Dogma 95 films

DOGMA 95 FILM	DETAILS
Mifune (1999)	This Danish film is the third Dogma 95 film to be made. During the accreditation process, the director made several confessions about rules he had broken. Among other wrongdoings, he confessed to having chased some chickens onto the set and having moved some furniture in the house to better suit the filming!
Dancer in the Dark (2000)	Starring Björk and directed by Lars von Trier, *Dancer in the Dark* is about a poor factory worker whose desire to save her son from blindness leads to tragedy. This is not an official Dogma 95 movie, but as a founding member of the Dogma 95 Collective, von Trier has followed some of its principles.
Dogville (2003)	Starring Nicole Kidman and directed by Lars von Trier, this movie is not an official Dogma 95 film but shares some of the characteristics. The film breaks a key rule – that shooting must take place where the action takes place. However, it does reflect other aspects of Dogma 95.

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Dogma 95

Moviestore Collection Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.6 *Dancer in the Dark (2000)*, starring Björk and Catherine Deneuve, is directed by one of the founders of the Dogma 95 movement, Lars von Trier. The film has divided critics, who either love it or hate it. For instance, on *The Movie Show* at the time, Margaret Pomeranz awarded it five stars whereas David Stratton gave it zero!

'In 1960 enough was enough! The movie was dead and called for resurrection. The goal was correct but the means were not! The new wave proved to be a ripple that washed ashore and turned to muck. The movie had been cosmeticised to death, they said; yet since then the use of cosmetics has exploded.

The "supreme" task of the decadent filmmakers is to fool the audience. Is that what we are so proud of? Is that what the "100 years" have brought us? Illusions via which emotions can be communicated? By the individual artist's free choice of trickery?'

Dogma 95, Filmmakers' Collective, Copenhagen, Denmark, 1995

11.2 ACTIVITIES

1   Some of the experiments conducted by the Soviet montage directors are fun to try yourself.
Create a reproduction of the Kuleshov effect by filming action in one location and then linking it to another. Use well-known locations so your audience will feel the Kuleshov effect but will know it isn't true. For instance, film inside the principal's office and open the door to leave. Cut to an exterior shot outside a door at the tuckshop and walk away. Your audience will be led to believe the principal's office is in the tuckshop – even though they know better. **Create** in storyboard form or shoot some collision of images sequences. In a short action sequence of about three or four shots, use collision of images to suggest to the audience that something occurred when no shot actually shows it happening. Systematically arrange the shots so that the codes make the meaning clear. For instance, show a close-up of a gun, and then a long shot of a body; or show a close-up of a fist, and then someone on the ground.

2   View the 'Men and the Maggots' sequence in the Soviet film *Battleship Potemkin* (1925). **Describe** Eisenstein's use of group motivation instead of Hollywood-style individual motivation to move the narrative forward, **identifying** a series of shots in the maggot sequence in which he has done this to illustrate the idea. **Analyse** the sequence together with the 'Odessa Steps' sequence, breaking each down into their constituent parts and making comparisons. Make judgements as to whether or not Eisenstein does use individual characters in this sequence. Compare the 'Odessa Steps' sequence with the way you think Hollywood would treat the subject matter.

3   **Design** a set proposal for a film in the German Expressionist style, using sketching as a pre-production technique. Design your set so that it reflects a state of mind rather than a strictly realistic rendition.

4   **Analyse** the appearance of the city in *Metropolis* (1927) and the city imagery for the science fiction film *The Fifth Element* (1997), together with the sci-fi neo-noir film *Blade Runner* (1982). Break each design down into its constituent parts and examine the meaning of each component.

5   Consider the influence of German Expressionism on contemporary cinema. Select a fiction film you are familiar with. **Analyse** the film to determine its degree of realism using the four standards used to determine film realism as **criteria**. The standards are surface reality, realistic acting and characters, plausibility, and technical and symbolic codes of realism.

6   The Italian neo-realist director Vittorio De Sica used non-professional actors in his film *Bicycle Thieves* (1948). View a sequence from the film. **Evaluate** the worth of this technique, making judgements about whether non-professionals improve or detract from the film.

7   View a sequence from the French New Wave film *Breathless* (1960). **Create** a list of the standard Hollywood codes that Godard deliberately breaks (e.g. jump cuts). **Evaluate** the effectiveness of Godard's anti-Hollywood approaches in the film, drawing conclusions about their impact on subsequent films.

8   Research some of the social issues facing British youth in the early 1960s just before the advent of the Beatles. **Create** a list of these concerns and then view a film from the British New Wave of social realism. **Analyse** the film to report on the extent to which the concerns are evident in it.

9   **Analyse** a contemporary Hollywood film using the basic standards of classical Hollywood narrative as the set criteria. Make judgements about the extent to which classical style is still being used, considering aspects of plot, objective storytelling, character causality, linear time and continuity editing.

10 Some critics have accused the Dogma 95 collective of hypocrisy. It is said they seem to believe in some types of technology but not others. They seem to believe in some 'cosmetics', but not all. They have been accused of just being anti-technology (but only modern technology). **Evaluate** the principles as they apply to some Dogma 95 films you have viewed. In small groups, discuss whether or not you believe the Dogma 95 principles are hypocritical.

TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY AND EMERGING FILM MOVEMENTS

Sometimes film movements can be difficult to identify until the films have been compared to other films and trends. This tends to happen well after the movement has begun because it takes a while for critics to discern patterns. Some contemporary movements include New Representative Cinema, Remodernism and Korean New Wave.

New Representative Cinema

New Representative Cinema is an example of a possible emerging film movement of the 21st century. New Representative Cinema is a film movement with a focus on representing the underrepresented voices of the 21st century when it comes to stories about their own cultural heritage. This approach has largely been from an African-American perspective but has included Asian-American, Hispanic-American and Indigenous filmmakers. With filmmaking technology being more and more accessible for everyone, this has led to an increase in stories from multiple perspectives.

Remodernism

In 2008, another modern film movement called Remodernism was conceived as a reaction to the homogeneity of film. Remodernism involved a published 15-point *Remodernist Film Manifesto*, encouraging filmmakers towards a 'new spirituality in cinema' and use of intuition in filmmaking. The remodernist film was described as being a 'stripped down, minimal, lyrical, punk kind of filmmaking'.

Remodernist film has links to the art movement known as 'Stuckism', which started in the UK. The movement was set up as a reaction against postmodernism in art.

The Remodernist film movement promotes a return to what is considered the emotional and spiritual meaning in cinema. It emphasises new ideas of narrative structure and subjectivity. Like Dogma 95, this is another example of a modern film movement with a manifesto made in advance of the movement itself.

Korean New Wave

Over the past 40 years, South Korea's rapid modernisation has created a complex national context. There has been rapid economic growth as well as increasing inequality and a significant loss of traditions. Filmmakers have been drawn to explore these socially relevant themes by a new artistic freedom since the country became more democratic in the 21st century. Increasing westernisation and the success of the K-pop music movement around the world generated an interest in Korean films and brought their filmmaking style to global attention.

Korean New Wave films explore societal issues of inequality and rapid social changes that leave individuals stranded. Many Korean New Wave films explore the clash between the old traditions and the new modernity. Revenge is often a powerful motif. The films are often violent and feature some of the darker aspects of the human condition. Lee Chang-dong's psychological thriller *Burning* (2018, rated M) makes a strong social commentary through a story of jealousy and betrayal. It is about a woman who loves two men – one rich and the other poor.

As a result of Korean New Wave, South Korea's film industry has become influential and internationally acclaimed. The Korean New Wave aesthetic is now globally significant and reflected in audience attendances in the western world.

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Korean New Wave

11.3 ACTIVITIES

1 **Resolve** a short fiction sequence in the style of one of the media artists discussed in this section. Follow the basic characteristics of their style and use the techniques favoured by its artist. **Resolve** conceptual and technical problems to create a moving-image media product that reflects a personal creative vision expressing your knowledge of the ways the artist enacts the key concepts.

NARRATIVE MOVING-IMAGE MEDIA ARTISTS

Ivan Sen (1972–), Queensland and New South Wales, Australia

Ivan Sen is an Australian First Nations filmmaker, director, screenwriter, editor, sound designer and composer. Sen's filmmaking is influenced by his personal experiences with racial and social segregation and his mother's efforts to escape domestic violence, using an approach that challenges traditional models of filmmaking. Sen's films explore characters caught between worlds, such as Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia.

Figure 11.7 Vaughn and Lena, teenagers on the run, share a joyful moment in Ivan Sen's drama *Beneath Clouds* (2002). Lena, the daughter of a First Nations Australian mother and an Irish father, is searching for her father. Vaughn has escaped from a youth detention centre because he needs to visit his dying mother.

Table 11.5 Key work of Ivan Sen

KEY PRODUCTS: IVAN SEN	KEY STYLISTIC AND AESTHETIC FEATURES OF ARTISTRY	CONVENTIONAL PRACTICES CHALLENGED
Beneath Clouds (2002) *Fire Talker* (2009), documentary *Mystery Road* (2013) *Goldstone* (2016)	• themes of dislocation, family, culture and race, place and identity • character caught between two worlds – Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia • taut, pared-back dialogue to allow silences to play out • motifs of landscape, land, skies, roads, low horizons • lingering camerawork • Sen as writer, cinematographer, composer, editor and director	Use of experienced, established actors – Sen often uses first-time performers as his protagonists

Alfred Hitchcock (1899–1980), UK and US

Alfred Hitchcock, known as 'the Master of Suspense', was a British filmmaker known for his artistry in making suspense and psychological thrillers. Hitchcock used visual storytelling to create tension and intimacy, and made innovative use of editing, camera angles and camera movement, drawing direct influence from German Expressionism. His stories explored complex, often morally ambiguous characters. Hitchcock's filmmaking directly influenced the genres of horror and thriller.

Figure 11.8 A disorienting moment in Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958). Scotty, the protagonist, suffers from vertigo. Hitchcock portrayed this sensation through use of the famous **contra zoom** (also known as dolly zoom or triple-zoom reflex; see *Nelson Film, Television & New Media, QCE Units 1 & 2*, page 68), where the subject remains stationary but the size of the background changes.

Table 11.6 Key work of Alfred Hitchcock

KEY PRODUCTS: ALFRED HITCHCOCK	KEY STYLISTIC AND AESTHETIC FEATURES OF ARTISTRY	CONVENTIONAL PRACTICES CHALLENGED
The Lodger (1927) *The 39 Steps* (1935) *Rebecca* (1940) *Notorious* (1946) *Strangers on a Train* (1951) *Rear Window* (1954) *Vertigo* (1958) *North by Northwest* (1959) *Psycho* (1960)	• understanding of audience, allowing the director to continually adapt to changing values and contexts • shadowy, expressionist-influenced lighting • building suspense through use of silence – influenced by beginnings in silent cinema and long takes • cutting away just when the audience wants to look • loading each shot and each cut with information, conveying characters' thoughts without words • often the middle-class 'everyman' protagonist has been wrongly accused and may engage in a double-chase • female protagonists are glamorous blondes • motifs – stairs, trains, brandy, personal cameo • frequent collaborations with: Bernard Herrmann (composer), Cary Grant, James Stewart and Grace Kelly (actors), Alma Reville (screenwriter)	• Hollywood lighting – three-point, studio interiors • Audience expectation: showing the audience what they want to see • The Hays Censorship Code (see *Nelson Film, Television & New Media, QCE Units 1 & 2*, page 116) through editing decisions and subtext

Terry Gilliam (1940–), USA/UK

Former member of Monty Python, Terry Gilliam is known for his surreal, visually rich style, imaginative dark humour and dystopian storytelling. His works blend reality and fantasy, and challenge conventional filmmaking through intricate set designs and narrative structure, with significant use of the bizarre.

Figure 11.9 One of many bizarre scenes from Terry Gilliam's *Brazil* (1985) – cosmetic surgery in a **dystopian** world. *Brazil* takes place in a totalitarian bureaucracy, obsessed with whimsical machines in disrepair. Gilliam uses surrealist, nonsense comedy to portray a society gone berserk.

ScreenProd/Alamy Stock Photo

Table 11.7 Key work of Terry Gilliam

KEY PRODUCTS: TERRY GILLIAM	KEY STYLISTIC AND AESTHETIC FEATURES OF ARTISTRY	CONVENTIONAL PRACTICES CHALLENGED
Jabberwocky (1977) *Brazil* (1985) *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen* (1988) *Twelve Monkeys* (1995) *The Brothers Grimm* (2005)	• surrealism • influence of animation – fantastical *mise en scène* • comic nonsense to create visions of society gone berserk • past or future settings • use of the grim and grotesque – e.g. blood and excrement • revisiting fairytales or familiar stories through a distorted lens • irreverent, low-brow wit • characters are naive dreamers, underdog protagonists • themes explore distrust of systems • frequent collaboration with Michael Palin (actor)	Social mores

Baz Luhrmann (1962–), Australia

Australian filmmaker Baz Luhrmann creates highly theatrical, colourful, spectacular cinematic works. His films exuberantly synthesise modern elements such as **anachronistic** music and fast-paced editing with classic love stories. Luhrmann's 'Red Curtain' style uses a key device, such as song and dance, to ensure the audience knows they are watching a film.

A. F. Archive/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.10 A wild song-and-dance sequence introduces us to the Moulin Rouge in Baz Luhrmann's musical film *Moulin Rouge!* (2000). The tragi-comic story of a star-crossed love between a poet and a courtesan, *Moulin Rouge!* uses well-known pop songs, extravagant, colourful sets and quick-cut musical sequences to construct an over-the-top, unreal world.

Table 11.8 Key work of Baz Luhrmann

KEY PRODUCTS: BAZ LUHRMANN	KEY STYLISTIC AND AESTHETIC FEATURES OF ARTISTRY	CONVENTIONAL PRACTICES CHALLENGED
Strictly Ballroom (1992) *Romeo + Juliet* (1996) *Moulin Rouge!* (2001) *Australia* (2008) *The Great Gatsby* (2013) *Elvis* (2022)	• 'Red Curtain' style • simple, predictable stories • heightened setting • use of a stylistic device to ensure audience involvement and engagement – e.g. iambic pentameter or singing • **hybrid** of multiple styles – music video, musical, stage opera, Hong Kong action films, 1970s disco, Mardi Gras, Bollywood • themes of love and rebellion • hybrid musical 'moments' – pause for extended, dynamic, lavish dance routines • intercut tracking shots • uses editing technology to create a distinct rhythm – fast cuts central to style • set and costume design highly colourful • frequent collaborations with: Jill Bilcock (editor) and Catherine Martin (production, costume, art design)	• Gender stereotypes • Realism • Audience expectation of twists or reveals • Blending of cinema with theatre

Akira Kurosawa (1910–1998), Japan

Pioneering Japanese filmmaker Akira Kurosawa's epic storytelling, visual composition and camera movement powerfully influenced the action, Western and adventure genres of Hollywood cinema. Kurosawa's films explored human nature and morality, and transcended cultural and linguistic barriers to have significant impact on global filmmaking.

ArenaPal/Performing Arts Images

Figure 11.11 A scene from the beginning of Akira Kurosawa's *Throne of Blood* (1957), an adaptation of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. The deliberate framing of the two men and the rising mist creates a mythical, foreboding world. Often Kurosawa's work fuses eastern and western influences – in *Throne of Blood*, Shakespeare is transposed to feudal Japan and infused with traditional Japanese Noh theatre.

Table 11.9 Key work of Akira Kurosawa

KEY PRODUCTS: AKIRA KUROSAWA	KEY STYLISTIC AND AESTHETIC FEATURES OF ARTISTRY	CONVENTIONAL PRACTICES CHALLENGED
Drunken Angel (1948) *Rashomon* (1950) *Seven Samurai* (1954) *Throne of Blood* (1957) *The Hidden Fortress* (1958) *Yojimbo* (1961)	• fusion of western editing styles and deep focus with eastern martial arts narrative • influence of John Ford's Westerns, Shakespeare, samurai tradition and classical texts • characters are isolated individuals, such as lonely men and samurai • themes explore ennobling self-preservation and self-sacrifice • framing and horizontal composition • staging of action – unrealistic and exaggerated blocking • deliberate use of movement to be unexpected, meaningful and cinematic • backgrounds of all shots contain movement – weather • shots often contain large groups of people • use of long lenses and deep focus • fluid camera movement in long takes • cut on movement • Kurosawa wrote and edited his own work • frequent collaborations with: Takao Saitō and Asakazu Nakai (cinematographers), Takashi Shimura, Kamatari Fujiwara and Toshirō Mifune (actors), Ichirō Minawa (sound effects engineer), Yoshirō Muraki (production designer) and Fumio Yanoguchi (sound technician)	• When to cut • How to use movement

Weblink
Akira Kurosawa – Composing movement

Jane Campion (1954–), New Zealand

Jane Campion is a New Zealand filmmaker creating poetic, intimate, atmospheric works exploring complex female characters. Her stories are highly visual and often feature vast, isolated landscapes. Campion's distinctive style challenges gender norms and societal expectations, focusing on nuanced inner conflicts. She was the first female director to win the Palme d'Or at Cannes Film Festival in 1993.

Album/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.12 Jane Campion's *The Piano* (1993). Ada and Flora arrive in the remote wilderness of New Zealand after a long journey from Scotland. The expressive impact of this shot comes from the incongruity between objects and location – a piano, better found in a house, and Ada's elaborate outfit, isolated in a long shot on an uninhabited grey beach. Campion's work often explores isolation and centres on strong female characters.

Table 11.10 Key work of Jane Campion

KEY PRODUCTS: JANE CAMPION	KEY STYLISTIC AND AESTHETIC FEATURES OF ARTISTRY	CONVENTIONAL PRACTICES CHALLENGED
An Angel at my Table (1990) *The Piano* (1993) *The Portrait of a Lady* (1996) *Bright Star* (2009) *Top of the Lake* (2013, 2017) – television series *The Power of the Dog* (2021)	• strong, grown-up female characters – trying to be themselves, but also trying to be what others want them to be • themes explore gender politics, e.g. seduction, repression, female sexual power • isolation • everyday experiences • use of words to express and conceal self • enormous, mystical landscapes • naturalistic audio • dreamy surrealism – actors seem directed to react just a beat after the audience assumes they should • lack of judgement for all characters	Gender stereotypes – role of women

Warwick Thornton (1970–), Northern Territory, Australia

Warwick Thornton is an Australian First Nations filmmaker, director and cinematographer whose work highlights social injustices and human dignity, and the isolation and resilience of Indigenous Australian communities. Thornton's work is influenced by his First Nations heritage, his personal experiences and a commitment to authenticity.

Moviestore Collection Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.13 'If you can turn the picture off and tell the story using only sound, then you're on the right path,' explains Warwick Thornton in an interview for the Criterion Channel. In *Sweet Country* (2017) (pictured), there is no music, just the diegetic sounds of the landscape and the people and animals moving through it; whereas, in vampire hunter television series *Firebite* (2021–22), a punk and grunge-influenced score was provided by Australian band, The Drones. Thornton's use of audio harmonises with his deliberately composed, intensely emotional visuals.

Table 11.11 Key work of Warwick Thornton

KEY PRODUCTS: WARWICK THORNTON	KEY STYLISTIC AND AESTHETIC FEATURES OF ARTISTRY	CONVENTIONAL PRACTICES CHALLENGED
Samson and Delilah (2009) *Sweet Country* (2017) *We Don't Need a Map* (2017), documentary (MA15+ – language) *Mystery Road* (season 2, 2020), television series *Firebite* (2021–2022), television series (MA15+ – strong gore) *The New Boy* (2023)	• embracing of Aboriginality in stories and themes • internal influence of growing up in an Indigenous community • response to dispossession of and inequalities faced by Australia's First Nations people since colonisation through stories demonstrating Indigenous survival • cultural critique delivered without holding back • symbolic location shooting – location as central to narrative and style • complex female characters • frequent use of outback Australian landscapes • visual, raw and uncluttered storytelling • reimagining of archetypal narratives, e.g. vampire hunters, Western frontier justice • importance of sound • emphasis on non-verbals (e.g. facial expressions) in actors' performances • use of non-professional/first-time actors • tension emerging from clash of cultures/ideas • Thornton as director of photography, cinematographer, director • use of anamorphic lenses to capture visually stunning images • frequent collaborations with: Andrew Robertson (gaffer), Nick Meyers and Roland Gallois (editors)	• Audience expectations of characters and genres • Stereotype and assumptions in relation to First Nations peoples • Plot lines challenge patriarchy • Commitment to decolonising Australian cinema

11.4 ACTIVITIES

1   **Resolve** a short fiction sequence in the style of one of the film movements discussed in this section. Follow the basic principles of the movement and use the techniques favoured by its followers. **Resolve** conceptual and technical problems to create a moving-image media product that reflects a personal creative vision expressing your knowledge of the key concepts.

CULT FILMS AND COUNTERCULTURAL ARTISTRY

Cult films tend to remain current and timeless because of their enormous popularity. Films such as *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975) continue to have a strong presence in culture today. Theatres across the US still show the film to the public, in some cases on a monthly basis, but especially around Halloween. As a result, the film has been 'in release' for about five decades. But what makes this film so popular? Why are fans so obsessed with it? These questions are at the heart of critical discussion of cult film.

A cult film is a one that develops an enormous fan base that is generally obsessed with the film. In many cases, cult films suffer from poor production values, although there are some examples that have high production values. In addition, cult films usually feature counterculture themes and ideas that shape the story. Countercultural approaches are those that are in opposition to or very different to the mainstream.

It is difficult to outline the general features of cult films because of the way their stories span many genres and many forms and make use of many different stylistic systems. They all seem to be very different from one film to the next. The one thing most critics agree on is that cult films are fuelled by counterculture and fandom – obsessed fans who find the body of work inherently fascinating at every level.

The original goal of many early cult films was to explore alternate ways of thinking. Thus, cult film directors forged their screen identities through counterculture by overcoming the conventions of Hollywood – its impersonal production machine with the recycling of stories with the same ideologies and values. Cult film directors have actively set themselves apart from whatever Hollywood was doing. If Hollywood promoted stories where heroes overcame villains, then cult film directors would think differently and tell stories where evil won in the end. It was a simple game of opposing values. As a result, many cult film directors developed reputations as 'rebels' in the film industry.

Types of cult films

There are two distinct ways in which finance and production value have functioned in the cult film body of work. This evolved into an observable scale within cult cinema: a range between trashy films and quality films.

Blade Runner (1982) commandeered a budget of approximately US$28 million, allowing director Ridley Scott to design an aesthetic that drew on different styles of art. Scott has since gone on to more famous work, establishing a reputation for a particular aesthetic drawn from large amounts of finance.

Forbidden World (1982) had a budget of approximately US$800 000, forcing creator Roger Corman to design an aesthetic constrained by finance and drawn from cheap materials.

Trashy cult films

Trashy cult films are popular films of a poorer aesthetic quality and appearance than Hollywood. They often have abundant issues with performance, continuity and execution. Many of these production issues function as constraints that inevitably affect the director's artistry in the screen space.

The Room (2003) was shot on a relatively small budget. Much of the production value was limited as a result, leading to inorganic or imitation set designs, limited props and casting, and so on. The casting department hired mostly untrained and unproven actors. This was made obvious in the execution of many of the scenes in *The Room*. Dramatic sequences were poorly acted – so ill-timed and caricatured that the scenes ended up being more comedic than suspenseful. What appeared on the screen was likely a fair distance from what director Tommy Wiseau had originally intended. Nevertheless, a certain artistry was forged as a result of the reception of the text, and that aesthetic had a particular meaning for the viewers.

Album/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.14 The caricatured choreography and performance of the dramatic scenes in *The Room* (2003) were so bad that it became a comedy hit. A trashy cult film is sometimes received as a comedy, even though the production might have been shot quite seriously. This leads to an identity for the director that is outside of the director's control.

Sometimes a director's artistry might work even within the constraints of low-budget production. The low-budget horror film *Sharknado* (2013) featured poorly designed and poorly executed CGI sharks. Much of the film was computer-generated and led to a particular directorial identity for Anthony C Ferrante that was connected to bad aesthetics. However, the film was celebrated for its poor execution. Ferrante became a popular 'bad director' for fans of the film, and this positive response led to the approval of four *Sharknado* sequels. As a result, Ferrante was able to further develop the association between his directorial identity and bad aesthetics across the *Sharknado* franchise.

Everett Collection Inc/
Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.15 The 'cardboard cut-out' appearance of the sharks in the horror film *Sharknado* (2013) was mostly a result of the limited budget of the film. The resulting poor aesthetic contributed not only to the film's cult status, but also the directorial identity of Anthony C Ferrante.

Quality cult films

Quality cult films are popular fan-driven films whose execution closely resembles that of Hollywood, particularly in terms of aesthetics, while drawing on large budgets.

Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982) is an example of a cult film whose aesthetics rival Hollywood productions. *Blade Runner* is also an example of a cult film where the director was able to control their own screen identity. The director's designs and ideas were largely unrestrained by a budget set in the millions. Much of what Scott wanted became realised in screen space. Scott's work is now celebrated as a good example of art in film.

A particular focus is often placed on Scott's visually arresting aesthetics, but there is also acknowledgement of other areas of production such as the performance of quality actors, elaborate sets, and lighting and colour. Scott's ability to mould these aspects of production into the resulting film is both a product of his skill and the freedom that comes from a big budget.

Everett Collection Inc/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.16 Ridley Scott on the set of *Blade Runner* with actor Harrison Ford. The enormous budget of the film gave Scott a lot of freedom in design, such as high-quality acting and lavish set design. All these privileges combined to create not only a quality directorial identity, but also a quality cult film to rival Hollywood's best.

Representing counterculture

Originally, the general emphasis of cult film was embedded in the idea of counterculture, where the stories of cult film were set against the values and ideologies of mainstream or the aesthetics of Hollywood film culture.

Early directors such as Roger Corman brought highly empowered leading women into his stories at a time when women were being represented by

Hollywood as soft and passive. Corman's 1956 film *Gunslinger* featured a tough woman capable of violence and revenge. At the same time, Hollywood was producing films such as John Ford's *The Searchers* (1956), where women were still defined by domestic duties such as cooking and looking after children. Much of this counterculture thinking still persists in cult film today.

Sharknado (2013) is a part of a larger cycle of contemporary low-budget horror films that intentionally make use of poorly designed CGI. Films such as *Sharktopus* (2010) and *Piranhaconda* (2012) each feature terribly unconvincing monsters that stand in opposition to the high-quality CGI monsters created by Hollywood. For many fans, that is part of the fun.

Director George Miller of the *Mad Max* film franchise, and other directors of this time, experimented with convention to intentionally set their work apart from the highly stylised imagery of Hollywood. Some of this experimentation was a result of the constraints of a low budget – the original *Mad Max* (1979) was a trashy cult film. In many ways, Miller's counterculture stemmed from a 'maverick' approach to film production in general. Miller found ways to create groundbreaking and fascinating imagery by changing the rules of cinematography. He constantly improvised because of the lack of film equipment on hand. He would use cars as dollies for motion shots and mount cameras in dangerous positions to push screen perspectives to new heightened effect.

Fascination in cult film – fandom

Cult film has some kind of inherent quality within it that not only draws in its fans, but also manages to sustain a presence in the film landscape, even today. Fandom exists in two key modes of communication: (1) as a community and (2) as a screen culture. In both cases, fandom receives validation and motivation through interaction.

Much of the Comic-Con culture is saturated in fans reliving their favourite characters through costume play. There are bikers from *Easy Rider* (1969), Cylons from *Battlestar Galactica* (1978) and Marty McFly from *Back to the Future* (1985). But cult film fandom has also thrived as a result of the internet. Whereas previously, fans were limited to interacting with each other at conventions, now they are able to communicate instantaneously through chat sites, blogs or websites designed to facilitate conversation about their favourite films. This instantaneity fuels fandom growth and sustains its presence.

Everett Collection Inc/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 11.17 The new and interesting (sometimes dangerous) approaches to cinematography were just the beginning for George Miller's counterculture in *Mad Max* (1979). His maverick style in directing created a significant identity for him – one that led to the development of a *Mad Max* franchise.

Figure 11.18 The revealing costumes of the male and female characters in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1975) were key to representing counterculture cosmetically. Female characters were often exploited in screen space – but in this case, men were subjected to the same treatment. Nothing of the kind was being produced in Hollywood at the time.

Figure 11.19 Fans gather at a convention dressed as their favourite characters. On the left is 'Number 5', the robot who came 'alive' in the cult classic *Short Circuit* (1986). While most conventions now celebrate all kinds of popular culture from comic books to Marvel cinema, iconic characters from cult film classics still surface from time to time.

11.4 ACTIVITIES

1 **Create** a plan for a 60-second scene. Try and make the scene reflect the idea of counterculture. For example, maybe one of your characters is acting rebellious, or perhaps you are using a challenge to a stereotype. Design the scene in the form of a table, listing the scene shot by shot. **Describe** what happens in each shot, giving additional information about the action.

2 Experiment with your shooting. Imagine you have zero budget, and don't have access to the correct camera equipment. Think outside the box by coming up with ways to replicate the following cinematography techniques, then shoot the scene:
   - a contra-zoom/triple-zoom reflex (see *Nelson Film, Television & New Media, QCE Units 1 & 2*, page 63)
   - a dolly shot
   - a Steadicam shot.

3 **Analyse** a scene from a popular cult film. **Evaluate** the use of *mise en scène* and the expression of counterculture.

SPACED PRACTICE

Stimulus: Trailer for *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1920).

Contextual information: *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1920) is possibly the first horror movie ever made. It helped launch the German Expressionist movement immediately after World War I in the context of a defeated Germany. In the story, an insane hypnotist forces his victim to commit murders. Themes in the film include the brutality of unquestioned authority and the line between sanity and insanity.

Question (Key concept – Languages): Analyse the use of lighting, camera angle, make-up and set design to represent the dark themes expressed in the trailer. **Evaluate** the effectiveness of the film's use of distorted realities to express the inner worlds of the characters. **Justify** your response with examples from the trailer.

Weblink
The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1920) Official Trailer

Resource
Scaffolding

12 Expressive film movements and artistry

TWENTIETH CENTURY EXPRESSIVE FILM MOVEMENTS

Artistry involves the deliberate use of representations, technologies and languages, and often, in constructing representations, and engagement in cultural or social critique. For example, the artists of the late 19th century aesthetic movement used sensual, beautiful and provocative imagery to challenge the overbearing conservative traditions of Victorian Britain. Engagement with features of expressive movements is a characteristic of artistry.

Key features of expressive productions

Mainstream film does not always succeed in telling stories that represent the varied and diverse identities of the world's audiences. This is where expressive **film movements** take the spotlight. Expressive films support artistry through being independent of the production requirements of institutional formulas (such as Hollywood).

Expressive film is generally:
- independent
- targeted at a **niche audience**
- often experimental
- not focused on narrative structure
- made for aesthetic or symbolic reasons rather than commercial profit.

Expressive films often emphasise the expressiveness and artistry of the director as author. They may focus on the internal influences of characters, and may not unfold using conventional form, narrative or style.

Expressive film movements break rules. They experiment with the technologies and languages traditionally used to challenge representations or to create new representations. Expressive film allows the moving-image media artist a canvas on which to innovate.

Early innovators

Innovative Russian filmmakers Sergei Eisenstein (1898–1948) and Lev Kuleshov (1899–1970), during the early years of the Soviet Union, experimented with the cut to create montage (see pages 142–143). They explored how a cut creates meaning through manipulating the audience to associate potentially unrelated and unconnected images. The impact of Eisenstein and Kuleshov was substantial. Montage to manipulate audience emotion has become a central element of moving-image media.

Figure 12.1 French impressionist filmmaker Abel Gance's epic *Napoléon* (1927) demonstrated an innovative way to use film languages and technologies to show a dynamic battle sequence. Gance used three cameras to shoot the same scene from slightly different angles. His experimentation with film languages and technologies makes *Napoléon* a highly innovative film.

Ronald Grant Archive

Dada

Dada, a word that does not mean anything, was a process-based anti-art movement centred in Germany and France from 1916 until the mid-1920s. Like German Expressionism, Dada was birthed from the emotional trauma and devastation of the First World War (1914–18).

The Dadaists saw the horrors of the First World War as confirmation that the existing social structures of nationalist politics, repressive social values and unquestioning conformity of culture and thought were degraded and corrupt. Dada reflected the disgust and rebellion of disillusioned French and Germans emerging from a lost youth.

At the first Dada exhibition in Berlin, a pig dressed in a German officer's uniform was suspended from the ceiling. Many people took offence, for Dada was a movement of criticism.

Dada's brief lifetime established the groundwork for **Surrealism**. Many Dadaists became Surrealists (or overlapped the movements), but Dada's highly

political nature meant that its works became labelled as 'degenerate' in Germany as the Nazis grew in power.

Figure 12.2 *Fountain* by Dadaist Marcel Duchamp – an 'artistic assault' on convention. Dada was a movement not just in film, but in visual art, music, theatre and poetry. The Dadaists used artistic forms to assault conventions and rational thought.

Fountain, 1917/64 (ceramic), Duchamp, Marcel (1887–1968) / The Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Israel / Vera & Arturo Schwarz Collection of Dada and Surrealist Art / Bridgeman Images. © Association Marcel Duchamp/ ADAGP. Copyright Agency, 2018

Table 12.1 Dada: key texts, languages, technologies and key representations

KEY TEXTS OF DADA	LANGUAGES OF DADA	TECHNOLOGIES OF DADA	KEY REPRESENTATIONS OF DADA
- Hans Richter, Germany: *Ghosts Before Breakfast* (1928) and *Inflation* (1927) - René Clair, France *Entr'acte* (1927) – a commission for the intermission of a ballet performance - Marcel Duchamp, France: *Anemic Cinema* (1926) (see Fig 12.3) - Man Ray, USA/France: *Retour à la raison* (1923)	- shape and pattern - one image begets another - rhythm and repetition	- collage and photo montage - inversion, superimposition and overlay	- controversial - meaning resides in meaninglessness - representations are subjective – entirely upon the viewer to determine

Figure 12.3 From Marcel Duchamp's Dada film *Anemic Cinema* (1926). Duchamp was a significant figure in the Dada movement. His work was nonsensical and irreverent. *Anemic Cinema* highlights the repetition motif common to much Dada film.

Figure 12.4 Dadaist poet Hugo Ball in 1916, presenting his Dada poem 'Karawane' at Club Voltaire. The poem and costuming indicate the irreverent, nonsensical nature of the movement. Ball's theatrical poetry is an example of the fusion of artistic forms that characterised Dada.

Everett Collection Inc/Alamy Stock Photo; Historic Collection/Alamy Stock Photo Art; Collection 3/Alamy Stock Photo

Moviestore Collection Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 12.5 A scene from *Un Chien Andalou* (1929) by Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí. A man's hand has a hole in the palm from which crawl living ants. A woman tries to stop the man from coming into her room. *Un Chien Andalou* was created as a deliberate insult to the quest of intellectuals to find meaning in everything. It is considered an audacious masterpiece of Surrealism and continues to influence filmmakers.

Features of Dada

Dada sought controversy. It thumbed its nose at authority and the conventions that governed the creation of 'Art' and spread its rebellion through theatre, poetry, visual art, film and even music. Dada artworks often combined these forms. It was total artistic anarchy, aiming to assault conventional definitions and traditions of art as well as rational thought.

In Dada, experimentation and the use of unorthodox materials is key. Artworks are characterised by anarchy, irreverence, rhythm and play. They are often created through spontaneous or chance-based procedures. The cathartic act of making is valued more than the creation of meaning.

The methodologies of Dada and its spirit of criticism and anarchy are very useful to the moving-image innovator seeking to challenge.

Surrealism

Surrealism emerged as a movement in the 1920s, influenced by the fashion for Freudian psychoanalysis – exploring dreams, subconscious and unconscious thoughts. As a movement, **Surrealism** was highly non-conformist and is strongly linked to explorations of identity.

Much was written by the group of artists who called themselves Surrealists during the foundation years of the 1920s. Leader and French writer André Breton (1896–1966) is considered by some to be the founder of Surrealism. The statement of intent in his *Surrealist Manifesto* of 1924 is particularly significant – that a Surrealist aims to express the functioning of thought, without being constrained by aesthetic or moral conventions.

Surrealism has continued as an influential expressive film movement, visible in the works of director David Lynch, such as *Twin Peaks* (1990–91, 2017) and *Mulholland Drive* (2001), and Terry Gilliam's *Brazil* (1985) and *Twelve Monkeys* (1995). Surrealism is also noticeable in sketch comedy such as *Monty Python's Flying Circus* (1969–74) and *The Mighty Boosh* (2003–07). Any dream sequence in films invariably contains Surrealism.

Features of Surrealism

Surrealism takes the hidden, personal, non-rational worlds of dreams and the primitive desires of the subconscious and expresses these in art. Through juxtaposition and the grotesque, Surrealists create fantastic, irrational or incongruous imagery. The word 'surrealism' reflects this – *sur* meaning 'over' or 'above', and *realism* meaning the viewing or representation of things as they really are. Surrealism means beyond realism, showing strangeness amid normality.

The Surrealists, in their rebellion against the rational thought of the bourgeoisie, were playful and audacious in their art-making, purposefully letting go of deliberate action. They believed that in letting go of traditions and socially acceptable behaviours, an artist's true nature would be revealed. Many were Dadaists, as Surrealism essentially grew from the Dada movement, so there is some crossover between artists and conventions.

Table 12.2 Surrealism: key texts, languages, key representations and technologies

KEY TEXTS OF SURREALISM	LANGUAGES OF SURREALISM	KEY REPRESENTATIONS OF SURREALISM	TECHNOLOGIES OF SURREALISM
• Salvador Dalí and Luis Buñuel, Spain: *Un Chien Andalou* (1929) • Maya Deren, USA: *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943)	• showing the grotesque (e.g. perversity, decay, unexpected violence and scatology), often close up • linking of disparate locations • construction of imagery featuring juxtaposition to create a 'beautiful' image – e.g. brutality vs serenity; strange among the familiar • *mise en scène* may reference familiar cultural or religious objects • light-hearted scenes with a seriousness of purpose	• exploration of dream and unconsciousness as a reality • expression of basic, primitive desires • art as ambitious and strange through use of the mysterious, marvellous, mythological and irrational • 'worship' of artificiality in B-grade films • interest in innocence and the naive	• deliberate use of cutting to link unrelated events/locations • special effects to convey the grotesque • visual effects e.g. **superimposition**

Figure 12.6 A very long arm reaches from above to put a flower on the road, creating a surreal moment from Maya Deren's *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943). A key feature of Surrealism is strangeness amid normality.

Figure 12.7 The infamous opening sequence of *Un Chien Andalou* (1929), encapsulating a key stylistic feature of Surrealism – brutality in a moment of serenity. Consequently, Surrealists often make use of special effects to achieve the grotesque.

ArenaPal/Performing Arts Images; Allstar Picture Library Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo

Impressionism

Impressionism as a film movement is tightly linked to the visual art movement. Impressionist filmmaker Jean Renoir transferred the emotive style of his famous father's Impressionist art into moving image. Perhaps because of this heritage, Impressionist cinema became a synthesis of other arts.

As a film movement, Impressionism was born out of the crisis that shook the French film industry after the First World War – a lack of domestic product. This stimulated a keen interest in local experimentation to develop a unique French style.

Impressionism had a short life as a film movement, and its most significant period was during the 1930s. However, its techniques diffused into other movements. We see Impressionism's influence today in the **subjectivity** explored in independent works such as those by Gus Van Sant – for example, *Good Will Hunting* (1997).

Features of Impressionism

Impressionism used film to convey emotional 'impressions' and sensations, fleeting moments and the 'essence' of objects and people. This was expressed through what French filmmaker Jean Epstein called *photogénie* or the quality that distinguishes a film shot from the original object photographed. This quality was created through camera movement and through use of optical devices. *Napoléon*, an iconic Impressionist film by Abel Gance, used overlay of double exposures, dissolves and composition of multiple images in the same frame to create *photogénie*.

Table 12.3 Impressionism: key texts, languages, key representations and technologies

KEY TEXTS OF IMPRESSIONISM	LANGUAGES OF IMPRESSIONISM	KEY REPRESENTATIONS OF IMPRESSIONISM	TECHNOLOGIES OF IMPRESSIONISM
• Abel Gance, France: *La Roue* (1923)'s train crash scene; *Napoléon* (1927)'s dream sequence • Jean Epstein, France: *Cœur fidèle* (1923)'s merry-go-round scene	• narrative structure • visual rhythm created by fast cutting • location shooting • split screen • moving cameras • colour tinting to illustrate setting or mood	• personal actions • psychology • emotions • flashbacks	• optical devices often used to create *photogénie* – e.g. superimposition, double exposure, dissolves

ArenaPal/Collection Christophe;
ArenaPal/Collection Christophe;
ArenaPal/Collection Christophe

Figure 12.8 Still from *La Roue* (1923) by Abel Gance. The director's use of overlay and superimposition convey the emotions of the characters.

Figure 12.9 Still from *Cœur fidèle* (1923) by Jean Epstein. Using double exposure and movement allows the audience to see a character's unspoken thoughts. Expression of emotions on film are a central focus of Impressionism.

Figure 12.10 To film *Napoléon* (1927) and convey a sense of the restless motion of the main character, Abel Gance kept his camera moving in innovative ways – for example, by mounting it on horseback to film a battle sequence.

Later 20th century expressive movements

The smaller, portable filmmaking technologies that developed through the second half of the 20th century enabled the increasing diversification and democratisation of moving-image media forms. This significantly empowered independent filmmakers and documentarians.

Non-narrative documentary

The non-narrative documentaries that emerged in the later years of the 20th century are visual tone poems structured around a theme or concept rather than a plot, and comprised of real-life documentary footage. This blending of art and documentary filmmaking aims to provide a meditative, immersive experience for the audience that provokes thought and reflection on the universal human experience. Such films encourage artistry, as they are liberated from the constraints of plot and structure. The experimentation driving non-narrative documentaries has stimulated artistic innovation.

Features of non-narrative documentary

In a non-narrative documentary, meaning is subjectively created by the individual viewer. The emotional experience of viewing is enhanced by the accompanying music and soundscape, as verbal information (such as a narrator) is rare. Rather than focusing on linear stories, non-narrative documentaries elevate aesthetic elements to stimulate emotional, intellectual or sensory responses in their audiences and encourage reflection on the human condition.

In the non-narrative documentaries of Godfrey Reggio and Ron Fricke (see Table 12.4), montages of mesmerising, cinematic visuals and immersive sound are used to provide commentary on themes such as the impact of technology and globalisation on human cultures.

Table 12.4 Non-narrative documentary: Key texts, languages, key representations and technologies

KEY TEXTS OF NON-NARRATIVE DOCUMENTARY	LANGUAGES OF NON-NARRATIVE DOCUMENTARY	KEY REPRESENTATIONS OF NON-NARRATIVE DOCUMENTARY	TECHNOLOGIES OF NON-NARRATIVE DOCUMENTARY
• Godfrey Reggio, USA: *Qatsi* trilogy *Koyaanisqatsi* (1982), *Powaqqatsi,* (1988) and *Naqoyqatsi,* (2002) • Ron Frike, USA: *Chronos* (1985), *Baraka* (1992) and *Samsara* (2011)	• no narrative structure or plot • lack of voice over or narration - non-verbal • symbolism and visual metaphor • sound and music harmonise / juxtapose with visual elements • immersive score to enhance imagery • montage	• exploration of universal concepts or themes • visual metaphors • places: global locations, striking landscapes • people: relationships with each other, technology, nature • events and ideas: cultural rituals, human spirituality, day to day human experience	• cinematic technology use to create visually stunning imagery, for example, macro lenses, aerial cinematography, large-format cinematography (e.g. IMAX) • slow-motion and time-lapse; can be reversed in post-production
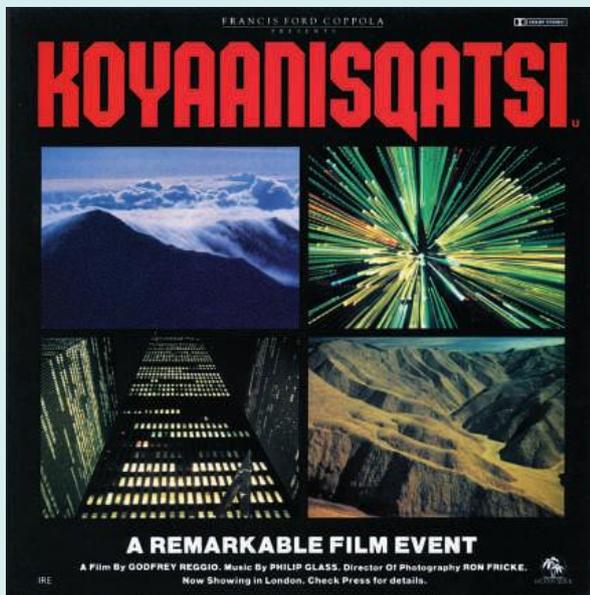
Figure 12.11 Godfrey Reggio's innovative *Koyaanisqatsi* takes its title from the Hopi language word for 'life out of balance'. The director chose not to use language in the film because he felt words were not sufficient to describe the current state of the world. Cinematographer Ron Fricke was a pioneer of large-scale cinematography and went on to direct his own acclaimed non-narrative documentaries.

12.1 ACTIVITIES

1   Research and view work from a moving-image media artist from each of the expressive movements discussed in this section. **Describe** the stylistic elements used in the artist's work. **Analyse** how they have experimented with signs, symbols, codes and conventions, and how they have used technologies to challenge conventional practices. **Create** a short documentary on each artist, using production technologies, including a 10-second sequence you have created that replicates each artist's style. **Describe** which of the languages, representations or technologies used by the discussed artists you would like to explore further in your own work, and **identify** how you might use these practices.

2   **Evaluate** the use of technologies in one of the expressive film movements in this section, **judging** the impact of the available technology on the movement. **Consider**, through research, contemporary films that may have used these technologies. **Evaluate** the significance of the influence of the movement's technologies on the contemporary filmmakers you researched.

3   View two of the works listed in this section, for instance, *Baraka* by Ron Frike. **Describe** the stylistic elements of the artwork, considering technologies, representations and languages. **Identify** the key features of the artwork in terms of personalised use of production technologies and post-production processes. **Evaluate** the impact of aesthetic traditions from film movements on the artist's artistry.

TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY EXPRESSIVE MOVEMENTS

With the new millennium and the emerging rapidly developing technologies, socio-political discussions about prejudice and diversity, and the increasing globalisation and connectedness enabled by internet technologies, new film movements have naturally emerged, responding to changing contexts of production and use.

Mumblecore

Mumblecore emerged as an independent film movement in America in the early 2000s, responding to the high-budget, commercial filmmaking prevalent in Hollywood. Filmmakers sought to create more authentic, relatable stories that reflected everyday life and interpersonal relationships. Emerging, accessible digital technologies allowed experimentation with narrative styles and a focus on character development, realism and emotional depth. The term 'mumblecore' was coined by critics and is not adopted by filmmakers of the movement.

Features of Mumblecore

Mumblecore was influenced by Dogme 95, DIY culture and reality television (such as *The Office*). It is characterised by low budgets, small casts and crew (with these roles often overlapping and with non-professional actors at times being drawn from the creators' own friendship or family circle), naturalistic dialogue and a focus on intimate, everyday experiences instead of perfectly-resolved story. Character-driven narratives are valued more than plot, with storytelling and dialogue distinguished by an improvisational feel.

The term 'mumblecore' is thought to be in recognition of the often muffled or mumbled quality of naturalistic dialogue, impacted by the low-budget audio recording equipment characteristic of mumblecore films.

Table 12.5 Mumblecore: key texts, languages, key representations and technologies

KEY TEXTS OF MUMBLECORE	LANGUAGES OF MUMBLECORE	KEY REPRESENTATIONS OF MUMBLECORE	TECHNOLOGIES OF MUMBLECORE
• Andrew Bujalski, USA: *Funny Ha Ha* (2002) • Joe Swanberg, USA: *LOL* (2006); *Hannah Takes the Stairs* (2007) • Noah Baumbach, USA: *Frances Ha* (2012)	• extensive improvisation, e.g. actors improvise dialogue for naturalism • real locations, not sets • plots usually revolve around trouble articulating desires and problems in romantic relationships • naturalistic costumes, lighting, make-up	• authenticity, naturalism and relatability in portrayals of contemporary life • people: housemates, friends, family • ideas: complexities of modern life, for example, work, individual struggles to find purpose • events: interpersonal relationships (e.g. moving out, friendship changes, impact of technology) • protagonists lack diversity: usually straight, cisgender, white, young (20s-30s), middle class, educated, aimless	• low budget • use of affordable digital video cameras

Moviestore Collection Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 12.12 In 2012 film *Frances Ha*, best friends and housemates Frances (Greta Gerwig) and Sophie (Mickey Sumner) navigate the impact Sophie moving out has on their friendship and other relationships. The technologies the filmmakers had access to when creating *Frances Ha* were those accessible by student filmmakers.

12.2 ACTIVITIES

1   Research and view work from a moving-image media artist from each of the expressive movements discussed in this section. **Describe** the stylistic elements used in the artist's work. **Analyse** how they have experimented with signs, symbols, codes and conventions, and how they have used technologies to challenge conventional practices. **Create** a short documentary on each artist, using production technologies, including a 10-second sequence you have created that replicates each artist's style. **Describe** which of the languages, representations or technologies use by the discussed artists you would like to explore further in your own work, and **identify** how you might use these practices.

2   **Evaluate** the use of technologies in one of the expressive film movements in this section, **judging** the impact of the available technology on the movement. **Consider**, through research, contemporary films that may have used these technologies. **Evaluate** the **significance** of the influence of the movement's technologies on the contemporary filmmakers you researched.

3   View two of the works listed in this section, for instance, *Funny Ha Ha* by Andrew Bujalski. Describe the stylistic elements of the artwork, considering technologies, representations and languages. **Identify** the key features of the artwork in terms of personalised use of production technologies and post-production processes. **Evaluate** the impact of aesthetic traditions from film movements on the artist's artistry.

EXPRESSIVE MOVING-IMAGE MEDIA ARTISTS

There are a variety of moving-image media artists from past and present, and from across the world, that highlight the stylistic and aesthetic features that are common to the creator's work and artistry.

Lotte Reiniger (1899–1981), Germany

Lotte Reiniger is one of the earliest innovators of animation. She created the first (surviving) feature-length animated film, *The Adventures of Prince Achmed* (1926), which animates stories from the 'Arabian Nights'. Reiniger recognised the power of animation to communicate magical, fantastical stories not possible in live action. She is considered to be the foremost pioneer of silhouette animation and devised the first multiplane camera, a technology that was to become critical to the success of Disney animations such as *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* and other animations in the pre-digital era.

Weblink
The Art of Lotte Reiniger' (1970) From the Vaults, The Met

Figure 12.13 Lotte Reiniger's animation style has been extremely influential. Her silhouette aesthetic, pictured in a scene from *The Adventures of Prince Achmed* (1926) has directly influenced later films and art, such as Disney's *Fantasia* (1940), the *Remains of the Day* sequence in Tim Burton's *Corpse Bride* (2005) and the 'Three Brothers' sequence in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows – Part 1* (2010).

Table 12.6 Key products: Lotte Reiniger

KEY PRODUCTS: LOTTE REINIGER	KEY STYLISTIC AND AESTHETIC FEATURES OF ARTISTRY	CONVENTIONAL PRACTICES CHALLENGED
The Ornament of the Enamoured Heart (1919), short *Cinderella* (1922), short *The Adventures of Prince Achmed* (1926) *Papageno* (1935) *Girl of the Golden West* (1942)	• use of narrative • influence of theatre – characters communicate actions and emotions through gestures • paper cut-out characters, not anatomically correct • made from tracing paper, cardboard, articulated with wire • stop-motion style movement • shadow puppetry (influenced by Greek folklore, Chinese shadow puppetry, Influence of German Expressionism) • use of the multiplane camera to achieve layers of foreground and background • synchronisation between sound and movement – sound established prior to animating • transformation and metamorphosis of characters • fairytales, opera narratives and fantasy stories – use of animation to create magical special effects • detailed settings • vibrant, solid colour backgrounds • collaboration with Carl Koch (photography), Walter Ruttman (backgrounds)	• taboos and censorship of homosexuality • animation as a form for short-form slapstick comedy only • reliance of facial expressions to express emotions or action

Jean-Luc Godard (1930–2022), France

Jean-Luc Godard was a key figure in the French New Wave movement. Godard challenged traditional approaches to filmmaking through the use of jump cuts, fragmented narratives, social commentary and philosophical undertones. Like fellow filmmakers in the French New Wave, Godard used location filming and natural lighting, and unlike the norms of Hollywood cinema at the time, did not prioritise showing the actors' faces.

Figure 12.14 A tender moment between Patricia and Michel in Jean-Luc Godard's film *Breathless* (1960). This sequence, like much of the film, was shot on Parisian streets – a break away from the studio-based nature of mainstream film. Godard liked to show fleeting moments of experience – such as in this moment.

Tracey Moffatt (1960–), Queensland, Australia

Tracey Moffatt is an internationally exhibited Australian First Nations artist who works across photography and moving image. Moffatt's work is influenced by her childhood growing up fostered by a white family. Moffatt avoids providing interpretation of her work, but emotional devastation and challenge of stereotypes (often sexist or racist) are common threads connecting her body of work. Moffatt's work includes photo narratives that probe social and cultural representations of First Nations Australians and women.
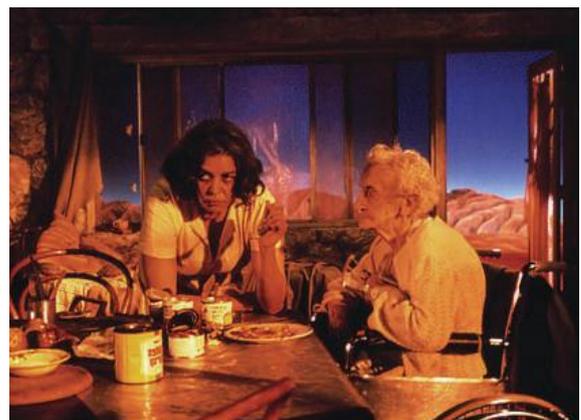
Figure 12.15 A dying white woman is cared for by her adopted Indigenous daughter in Tracey Moffatt's *Night Cries: A Rural Tragedy* (1990). The film is an emotive portrayal of the relationship between mother and daughter, and is powerfully supported by vibrant, colour-saturated *mise en scène* and a soundscape.

Table 12.7 Key products: Jean-Luc Godard

KEY PRODUCTS: JEAN-LUC GODARD	KEY STYLISTIC AND AESTHETIC FEATURES OF ARTISTRY	CONVENTIONAL PRACTICES CHALLENGED
Breathless (1960), also known as *A bout de souffle* *Vivre sa vie* (1962), also known as *My Life to Live* *Pierrot le fou* (1965) French New Wave cinema	• natural light, creating soft shadows • use of faster film speeds and lighter cameras • handheld camerawork • improvisation • location filming – e.g. on real streets and inside cars • jump cuts and sudden changes in shot distance – cuts as beautiful in themselves, serving to emphasise that the audience is watching cinema • homage • sensory experience • self as subject – imagination, fragility, alienation • the shot as a unit of time – of thought, not just action • freeze frames to extend the pleasure of looking • fleeting aspects of experience • a look at the back of actors' heads at times – audiences don't always have to see faces • ambiguous conclusions • unclear character motivations • characters searching for meaning – indefinable, transcendent • collaborations with Raoul Coutard (cinematography)	• narrative cinema conventions – Godard is quoted as saying, 'A film should have a beginning, a middle and an end, but not necessarily in that order.' • cinema not about capturing real life, but as part of life • use of studio conventions, such as makeup and three-point lighting • use of shot and cut – the temporal and spatial continuity of traditional narrative film storytelling

Table 12.8 Key products: Tracey Moffatt

KEY PRODUCTS: TRACEY MOFFATT	KEY STYLISTIC AND AESTHETIC FEATURES OF ARTISTRY	CONVENTIONAL PRACTICES CHALLENGED
Nice Coloured Girls (1987) *Night Cries: A Rural Tragedy* (1990) *BeDevil* (1993) *Lip (1999), *Artist* (2000), *Love* (2003), *DOOMED* (2007) and *REVOLUTION* (2008)	• photo narratives • *video collage and montage – re-edits of pre-existing sources into ironic commentary and pastiche • formal and stylistic experimentation with still and moving image • explores gender, sexuality, history, representation and race – e.g. social and cultural representations of Indigenous Australians and women • non-realistic narrative scenarios – vignettes • sets: shot on interiors – 'fakeness' of locations • 'fakeness' of locations reinforced by sound mixing, audio field recordings, low tones • non-acting • evocative use of sound and music • juxtaposition • humans superseded by entities woven within landscape • layering of cultural icons and references, especially Indigenous Australian, photographic and historical	• the social construction of Aboriginality • linear narrative structures of western Hollywood storytelling

*collaborations with Gary Hillberg

Wong Kar-wai (1958–), Hong Kong

Wong Kar-wai is a celebrated Hong Kong filmmaker known for his poetic and introspective, visually stunning, emotionally resonant films that often explore themes of love, memory and longing. His unique style has redefined Asian cinema and is characterised by vibrant use of colours, slow motion and expressive cinematography. Wong Kar-wai's characters drift through life, experiencing longing and unfulfilled desire. The director's work is languid and romantic, capturing fleeting moments of beauty, and focusing on creating mood more than narrative.

Figure 12.16 Wong Kar-wai's film *In the Mood for Love* (2000) is a dreamy, aesthetically beautiful mood piece set in 1962 Hong Kong. Su Li-zhen and Chow Mo-wan are attracted to each other, but don't want to have an affair and thus stoop to the moral level of their own unfaithful spouses.

Table 12.9 Key products: Wong Kar-wai

KEY PRODUCTS: WONG KAR-WAI	KEY STYLISTIC AND AESTHETIC FEATURES OF ARTISTRY	CONVENTIONAL PRACTICES CHALLENGED
Days of Being Wild (1990) *Fallen Angels* (1995) *Happy Together* (1997) *In the Mood for Love* (2000) *2046* (2004)	• dreamy, floating camerawork – fleeting moments of beauty • characters are drifters, existential loners • style is languid, romantic, elliptical • rambling, anarchic process • themes of loss, longing and unfulfilled desire; transient, surface beauty of youth, experiencing social and sexual ennui • mood more important than narrative • use of 'dead time', as per **Italian neorealism** • frequent collaborations with Christopher Doyle (cinematography) and William Chang (designer, editor)	• use of scripts

12.3 ACTIVITIES

1   View two of the works listed in this section, for instance, *Night Cries* by Tracey Moffatt. Describe the stylistic elements of the artwork, considering technologies, representations and languages. **Identify** the key features of the artwork in terms of personalised use of production technologies and post-production processes. **Evaluate** the impact of aesthetic traditions from film movements on the artist's artistry.
2   **Design**, **create** and **resolve** a moving-image sequence in the style of your chosen artist, exploring the theme of 'joy'. Use a storyboard to **design** how you will use technical and symbolic codes according to the artist's stylistic identity. Use production technologies and post-production processes to **create** your sequence, ensuring that you **resolve** the sequence by making production and post-production choices that align with the artist's personalised aesthetic and help communicate the theme of 'joy'.

SPACED PRACTICE

Weblink
Lotte Reiniger:
The animation
genius you've
probably never
heard of

Resource
Scaffolding

Stimulus: 'Lotte Reiniger: the pioneering animation genius you've probably never heard of' (BBC Ideas).

Contextual information: Lotte Reiniger was an animation innovator and early filmmaker (born in Germany; lived 1899–1981) who was known for her use of shadow puppets and development of the multiplane camera, which was technology later used extensively by Disney.

Question (Key concept – Technologies): **Analyse** how Reiniger's stylistic and technological innovations are communicated by the documentary. **Evaluate** how effectively the documentary communicates Reiniger's artistic legacy. **Justify** your viewpoint by analysing and evaluating the stimulus, also considering the contexts of production and use.

13 World cinema

WHAT IS WORLD CINEMA?

World cinema usually refers to films from countries outside of the English-speaking world. However, the term can also include films from countries outside of one's own country, excluding Hollywood. Before world cinema, Americans tended to use the term 'foreign films'.

Typologies of world cinema

A classification system for films from around the world has been prepared by Dr Stephen Crofts, an authority on national cinemas. He lists eight types of cinema:

1 **United States cinema** – may include US independent and English-speaking cinema that imitates US cinema production style.
2 **Asian commercial cinema** – includes China, Japan and Bollywood.
3 **Entertainment cinema** – in Europe and the developing world.
4 **Totalitarian cinema** – includes cinema in countries where there is considerable political or religious control.
5 **Art cinema** – mainly concerned with aesthetics or personal artistry.
6 **International co-productions** – involving two or more companies from more than one country.
7 **Third cinema** – political and revolutionary in nature (see alternative typology in following list).
8 **Sub-state cinema** – small centres of filmmaking within a larger country; for example, French-speaking Quebec in Canada or possibly Hong Kong within China.

Another system was devised by Argentinian filmmakers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino. They list three cinema types in the world:

1 **First cinema** – large-scale commercial production along Hollywood lines. It includes Bollywood, South Korean and Chinese cinemas.
2 **Second cinema** – art-house, *auteur*-style and independent means of production represent the second mainstream type of cinema.
3 **Third cinema** – political films of liberation from national and corporate oppression. Third cinema is not necessarily 'third-world' cinema. It can be made in the first world (developed countries). For instance, Morgan Spurlock's *Super Size Me* (2004) might be called 'third cinema'. Similarly, the films of Michael Moore (USA) or Ken Loach (UK) could be classified as 'third cinema'.

Resource
Key concept test

13.1 ACTIVITIES

1 Using one of the typologies of world cinema, provide examples of representative films for each of the categories. Describe how each of the films suits its place in the typology, clarifying its location in the classification based on your understanding of its meaning.
2 **Evaluate** the worth of the two typologies of world cinema. Do you believe they are adequate? Are there cinemas from some countries that don't fit? Are there other types of films? **Evaluate** the status of the typologies in the contemporary globalised world.

INDIAN CINEMA

'Cinemas are the temples of modern India.'
Das Gupta, Indian film critic (1921–2011)

Indian movie production is twice the size of Hollywood's. Each year, more than 1000 new films are distributed to more than 13 000 movie theatres, with an average audience of 11 million each day. More than 800 languages are spoken in India, and there can be as many as 20 different language versions of the same film. The cinema is perhaps the sole model of national unity, says Indian cinema analyst Vijay Mishra.

Bollywood

Bollywood was originally a nickname for the Indian film industry, but it has now gained wide acceptance

Pep Roig/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 13.1 Each year, Indian cinema produces more movies than Hollywood. In the cities and the villages, cinema has an important cultural place in Indian daily life.

as a term for the Hindi-speaking film industry based in the city of Mumbai. The name is a combination of Hollywood and Bombay (the old name for Mumbai).

The Bollywood style of filmmaking is also used in other film centres throughout India. The Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam commercial cinemas produce films in their own languages but use Bollywood conventions.

Cultural context

After their shows in Paris, the Lumière brothers brought the first moving pictures to India in 1896. The first Indian feature film in 1913 was based on themes from Indian mythology – gods and demons in combat. Cinema became immensely popular very quickly, partly because most Indians could not read at the time and had relied on an oral tradition of storytelling.

By the 1930s, India had developed a studio system very similar to that used in Hollywood. Just as the American cinema developed the classical Hollywood narrative, India developed its own pattern of storytelling. Many films had a mythological basis and used song and dance extensively. A Bollywood film of the 1930s could have 50 or 60 song sequences.

As box office prices were relatively high, audiences wanted their money's worth, so a feature film was three to four hours in length.

In 1947, at the time of Indian independence from Britain, movie stars became prominent in Indian life, and magazines and newspapers began writing about their exploits. The huge success of the film *Mother India* (1957) showed the ability of the film industry to reflect the national mood and become a uniting force in Indian culture.

'Playback singers' gained wide acceptance at this time as the links between the film and music industries developed. On-camera actors mimed to the off-camera voice of the playback singer. The practice became so widespread it was soon normalised. Indian audiences readily accept singing voices that are dramatically different from the actors' real voices.

Even today in the 2020s, 65 per cent of India's population lives in villages. In the mid-20th century that figure was even higher, but by the 1970s the great movement to the cities had begun. Cinema-going audiences grew. Action and revenge movies became popular. Bollywood films began to take a mixed approach to filmmaking, combining all genres in a single movie. Sometimes this is referred to as Bollywood masala (spice mixture). 'This can translate into the hero fighting a sinister politician in one scene and serenading his heroine, with 40 dancers moving in unison behind him, in the next,' says Indian film expert, Nasreen Munni Kabir.

In the west, the music recording industry developed separately from the movie industry. In India, these industries are intertwined. By the 1970s, films had become one of the prime sources of recorded music in India. Pop music was the song-and-dance music from Bollywood films. Cheap cassette players made it possible for the bulk of the population to listen to much-loved film soundtracks.

'Most Bollywood films do not shoot what we know in the West as sync sound. Large numbers of Indian films are totally dubbed after the movie has been edited.

As much as 30 per cent of a film's financing can come directly from the "music launch" of an upcoming release. This usually takes place a few weeks before the general release of the picture.'

Larry Engelmann, Bollywood film colourist

Television and video came to the Indian villages in the 1980s and 1990s, changing film viewing habits dramatically. Many villages pooled their funds to install satellite dishes. As a result, Bollywood suffered a temporary decline.

One way that Bollywood countered the influence of television in the 2000s was to increase the spectacle and glamour in movies. Another response was the rise of independent producers, many of whom rejected the escapism of traditional Bollywood in favour of **social realism**.

In the 21st century, Indian migration to countries such as Australia, the United States and the United Kingdon has created demand for Indian films worldwide. The spread of Indian film festivals has also increased the awareness of Indian film. Social media and streaming services have increased the accessibility of Bollywood films in other nations. There is significant interest in Bollywood in China, for instance.

In the 2020s, Bollywood films have also started to address issues that signify a change in traditional values to those more common in the west. Mental health concerns or sensitive portrayals of LGBTQIA+ people are beginning to appear, according to researcher Bhumi Patel.

Bollywood style has become an influence in the film industries of many countries. Australian director Baz Luhrmann attributes the look and sound of *Moulin Rouge!* (2001) to Bollywood musicals.

Figure 13.2 A set at Ramoji Film City, the world's largest film studio, in the city of Hyderabad, India. Indian cinema has several subsets, developed along regional lines. Films produced in Hyderabad might be considered Bollywood in the west, but in India might be called 'Tollywood' – named after the Telugu language spoken in many of the films.

Features of Bollywood cinema

Like Hollywood, Bollywood makes many different kinds of films. India has a significant independent sector producing what might be called art films. However, some features of Indian filmmaking have remained consistent over the past century. Certain themes or discourses crop up regularly, even though filmmakers address them in different ways and from different points of view:

- **Length and time.** Bollywood films are usually between three and four hours. Hindi films also structure time somewhat differently from Hollywood films. Flashbacks are used extensively. Stories are not always told using the sequential time structure of the average Hollywood blockbuster.
- **Indian nationalism.** Many films raise questions of Indian identity such as the Indian nation and its history, national identity as it affects individuals or the Indian diaspora (migration or dispersal) in other countries. Examples include *Namaste England* (2018), *Salaam Namaste* (2005; filmed in Melbourne) or *Singh is King* (2008; filmed in Brisbane and the Gold Coast).
- **Mythology.** Like many Western epics or fantasy films, Bollywood films often refer to mythological characters such as gods and demons. They may also draw on traditional religious stories or folktales. For instance, *Love Story 2050* (2008) combines science fiction with an eastern mystical approach to reincarnation.
- **Traditional plots.** According to Indian film critic Asha Kasbekar, certain plot lines appear frequently in Bollywood films.
  - **Family relationship plots** are very common and often focus on an individual character and his/her response to dilemmas relating to family duty. Family plots also often involve a search for a lost brother or a quest to be reunited with the character's mother. Arranged marriages are another common plot element. One film that demonstrates this concern with family is *Kabhi Khushi Kabhie Gham …* (2001).
  - **Romance stories** are a main theme of Bollywood. In a typical story, an impoverished young man falls in love with a wealthy woman. Her father disapproves,

and the young man must prove his worth – perhaps by saving her father's fortune or even his life. Love triangles also feature regularly in Bollywood plots.

- **Song and dance.** Every film typically has five to 10 songs, often dubbed by professional playback singers. Film soundtracks represent 75 per cent of the total music market. Most films feature at least two dance items. The dances are a loose mixture of traditional and western music styles.
- **Emotion.** Emotional appeal is considered very important in Indian film, says Asha Kasbekar. 'It must reach out and touch their hearts.' This tradition goes back to ancient Indian theatre, which is governed by eight emotions (love, humour, energy, anger, fear, grief, disgust and astonishment) and eight matching sentiments (erotic, comic, heroic, furious, apprehensive, compassionate, horrific and marvellous).
- **Spectacle.** Traditional Indian entertainment uses elaborate costumes, makeup and masks. Bollywood has incorporated these traditions into spectacular visual displays. Lavish sets and exotic locations make expensive backdrops for actors in glittering costumes. Love songs and dances are often performed as elaborate dream sequences. Often a new panoramic setting and complete costume change accompanies each verse of the song. Switzerland is a favourite location because it resembles the alpine beauty of war-torn Kashmir. *Salaam Namaste* (2005) was filmed in Melbourne. *Love Story 2050* was filmed in Adelaide. Other films set in Australia include *Janasheen* (2003), *Chak de! India* (2007) and *Prem Aggan* (1998).
- **Stars.** It is possible that Bollywood actors are more important to a film's success than they are in Hollywood. Although male stars are paid more than female stars, both can earn a lot of money. Unlike Hollywood stars, Indian stars work on numerous films at once. It is not uncommon for them to be acting in 10 to 12 films at the same time. Huge hand-painted billboards of stars are all over Indian cities. These actors often appear in national television commercials as well, and many go on to pursue political careers.
- **Genre 'masala'.** Bollywood films almost always include a mix of family drama, action sequences, romance and music. Many genres can appear in

Figure 13.3 A travelling cinema set up in the village of Palli. With nearly half of India's population living in villages, Bollywood filmmakers must consider that their films may be shown on ancient projectors with the sound system turned up high to drown out the noise of cooling fans.

Danish Siddiqui/Reuters

one film. The primary focus is the emotion of the film, and the dominant emotion determines the style of film.

- **Censorship.** Just as Hollywood was constrained by the Hays Code (see *Nelson Film, Television & New Media, QCE Units 1 & 2*, Chapter 8, page 116), Bollywood has its own censorship code. The focus is on perceptions of decency and morality. Nudity is forbidden. A discreet kiss is rarely permitted in a love scene. Seductiveness is transferred to the song-and-dance sequences.

Indian movies

Table 13.1 shows titles that have been released and classified in Australia. Many of them are by 'indie' (independent) directors rather than Bollywood directors.

Influential Indian directors

Anurag Kashyap (1972–)

Sometimes called the Tarantino of India, Anurag Kashyap is often hailed as an *auteur* in Indian film. He is often seen as having a signature style and tends to have a set of common themes in his work. Kashyap is often credited with having influenced Danny Boyle in the making of *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008). His films are well-known in world cinema circles and include *Gangs of Wasseypur* (2012), *Ugly* (2013), *Raman Raghav*

Table 13.1 Indian films classified and released in Australia

INDIAN FILM TITLE	DETAILS
Earth (1996)	While not strictly a Bollywood film, Deepa Mehta's feature *Earth* addresses Indian nationalism.
Salaam Bombay! (1988)	This moving film is in the Indian independent social realist tradition rather than commercial Bollywood style, but it makes a useful contrast. Many of the actors are amateurs and street children. It was funded internationally.
Monsoon Wedding (2001)	Although funded internationally, Mira Nair's film contains many of the traditional elements of Indian cinema.
Veer-Zaara (2004)	Starring Shah Khan, *Veer-Zaara* is a classic Bollywood love story.
Queen (2014)	This film by Vikas Bahl is often seen as feminist. A young woman is jilted by her fiancé and then decides to go on her honeymoon by herself. She travels alone in Europe and eventually thanks her ex-fiancé for freeing her from her old identity.
Raman Raghav 2.0 (2016)	Directed by Anurag Kashyap, this film is based on the story of a real-life 1960s serial killer who lived in Mumbai. The film is a violent thriller about a policeman and a murderer whose lives seem to mirror each other.
Gully Boy (2019)	Street kids in Mumbai try to make it big as rappers hoping to impress real-life rapper Nes. A Bollywood movie in the style of Eminem's *8 Mile* (2002).
Laapataa Ladies (2024)	Known in the US as *Lost Ladies*, this movie is directed by Kiran Rao. Two brides get lost on a train and find themselves accidentally swapped over.

Figure 13.4 *Gangs of Wasseypur* (2012) is the story of the violent power struggles between three crime families. Some critics have likened it to the Australian film *Animal Kingdom* (2010).

main characters are migrants in one way or another. However, they are migrants in a brutally greedy globalised world.

Deepa Mehta (1950–)

The Indian–Canadian filmmaker Deepa Mehta became widely known with the release of her elements trilogy. Each of the three films focuses on the experience of Indian women in different ways. *Fire* (1996) focuses on controversial female desire, *Earth* (1998) looks at the experiences of women during India's battles for independence and *Water* (2005) looks at the oppression of Hindu widows. Mehta moved from India to Canada in 1973. She sees herself as a hybrid person who moves between continents. The work of Mehta tends to focus on:

- the oppression and brutalisation of women in traditional societies
- women with a strong sense of inner power
- unconventional people undertaking journeys of new identity to break free from highly restricted traditional identities
- exotic features of traditional India
- migrant experiences.

Mehta has also produced a number of North American films that form another body of work. The Indian films are often about restricted identities and material poverty. The North American films are about life in overly individual societies where family and community ties have broken down. The lonely characters in these films yearn for the warmth of traditional extended families and close communities.

2.0 (2016) and the Bollywood **neo-noir** titled *Kennedy* (2023). Kashyap's work tends to exhibit the following features:

- brutal realism
- dark but very engaging stories
- noir-ish dystopian *mise en scène*
- angry arrogant characters struggling with personal issues
- experimental **soundscapes**
- innovative editing.

A key influence in Kashyap's filmmaking is his own life experiences. The experience of the migrant as someone perpetually in motion across global urban environments is a common theme in Kashyap's films, argues Kaushik Bhaumik of Jawaharlal Nehru University New Delhi, stating most of Kashyap's

Moviestore Collection Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 13.5 *Water* (2005) set in 1938: rural Indian widows were forced into poverty after the death of their husbands. Hindu widows were also often faced with death themselves, or with banishment. The films of Deepa Mehta often focus on the restrictions on women in traditional societies, and the journeys the women make to be free.

CHINESE CINEMA

Chinese-language cinema has at least three distinct branches, based in mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan.

In the west, Chinese cinema is taken to refer to the movie production of mainland China. Most of these films are produced by graduates from the state-approved Beijing Film Academy. Production output varies between 100 and 200 films a year.

Historical and cultural context

After the 1949 communist revolution, the Soviet style of filmmaking (see page 142) was the biggest influence during the Chairman Mao era. Chinese films focused on revolutionary heroes and the struggles of working people to overcome oppressive landlords and capitalists.

Under Chairman Mao, young men and women shared political idealism and revolutionary goals. The state called this style of filmmaking 'socialist realism' or 'revolutionary romanticism'. Directors were ordered

13.2 ACTIVITIES

1 One *New York Times* movie critic believes the typical Bollywood movie can easily set world records in 'genre pile-ups' (number of genres in one film). This may well be true for many other movies of this genre. Select an Indian cinema movie you have access to. **Create** a list of the western genres it seems to bundle together.

2 Select a Bollywood movie you have access to. **Analyse** its use of traditional ideas of emotion, examining which of the classical emotions and/or sentiments is dominant. Consider which others are present and **evaluate** their relative strengths in the story.

3 Compare a Bollywood movie and its use of song and dance with a typical Hollywood musical. **Analyse** the way Bollywood inserts musical sequences into the narrative. Compare this with the way Hollywood moves narrative forward through music and lyrics.

4 Australian director Baz Luhrmann visited the Mumbai film industry before making *Moulin Rouge!* (2001). **Evaluate** the significance of the influences from Indian cinema that you can see in this film. Draw conclusions about the degree to which Bollywood has influenced Hollywood through the musical.

to integrate revolutionary movements into their films and to portray characters as class types. For instance, a hero would be a factory or farm worker, whereas a villain would be from the capitalist class – perhaps a landlord or a foreign factory owner.

Directors also tried to make their films as Chinese as possible. Often, they would include symbols from traditional poetry or painting. For example, a shot might be framed by branches of blossoms in the style of traditional 'bird and flower' painting, or a film might start with a long tracking shot or pan to represent the unrolling of a scroll.

After the opening of China to world trade in 1978, a new generation of filmmakers emerged. They were called fifth-generation directors because

they were the fifth generation of directors to come out of the Beijing Film Academy since 1949. Unlike earlier graduates, they were allowed to begin directing straight away, and their films began appearing in the 1980s. Fifth-generation directors abandoned the socialist realist model in favour of a return to historical Chinese literary and artistic traditions. The best-known of these films are *Yellow Earth* (1985), *Raise the Red Lantern* (1991) and *Farewell My Concubine* (1993). Foreign distribution and funding ensured these films are well known in the west.

Increasing industrialisation brought problems to China's cities. A 'sixth generation' of filmmakers is beginning to depict these problems. Their films are often privately financed and shot in low-budget digital formats using handheld cameras. One sixth-generation film that is readily available in the west is *Beijing Bicycle* (2001).

Epics are not favoured by sixth-generation directors. Neither are mythical heroes and spectacle loved by western audiences. The films are likely to be structured around the daily lives of ordinary people. The narratives are sometimes called 'stream of life' stories because of their natural flowing style and non-political subject matter.

Films of broad international appeal are now being made in China, starring Chinese actors. Some of these have toppled Hollywood films at the US box office. These internationally produced Chinese films are often in the *wuxia* genre – examples include *Hero* (2002) and *House of Flying Daggers* (2004).

Features of Chinese cinema

Before the 1980s and the fifth generation of Chinese filmmakers, films kept to the socialist realism style. In contrast, fifth-generation films are a return to classical Chinese traditions. Chinese painting has been a key source of inspiration. Some critics have referred to this as the 're-Orientalising' of Chinese film. According to Hao Dazheng, professor of film theory at the China Film Art Research Centre in Beijing, these films share many of the following features:

- **Traditional painting style.** Historically, Chinese painting uses a different sense of perspective from that used in western art since the Renaissance.

Figure 13.6 In traditional Chinese painting, human figures are often dwarfed in a landscape that occupies most of the frame. Fifth-generation Chinese filmmakers have used this type of framing.

Paul Freeman/Private Collection/Bridgeman Images

Western art uses a perspective based on the point of view of one person, with the distance disappearing away from a single vantage point. Chinese landscape painting uses a multifocal perspective that is based on multiple viewpoints. Chinese painting aims to represent spiritual rather than physical truths. In film, this multifocal approach influences camera style, *mise en scène* and plot lines.

- **Large-scale framing.** In ancient Chinese thinking, humans are mere specks in nature's grand scheme. Chinese painting miniaturises humans in vast natural landscapes. Newer Chinese films reflect this with an emphasis on scenic shots on a larger scale than is typical in western films. In fifth-generation films and beyond, more of the screen is occupied by space. High or low shots often fill the screen with earth or sky. If humans are represented as only a small

part of nature, then there is no need for the traditional Hollywood sequence of shot sizes that move from long shot to close-up.

- **Medium shots emphasised.** Traditional Chinese social taboos did not allow for the sort of close-up, face-to-face interaction that is permissible in the west. Lots of close-up shots can be a source of uneasiness. Fifth- and sixth-generation filmmakers preferred medium shots that show a character's activities but do not invite overly personal inspection.
- **Limited shot-size variation.** According to Hao Dazheng, Chinese directors avoid sudden changes of shots. In the west, a jump from a long shot to a close-up may give force and rhythm to a scene. In contrast, Chinese directors often use one primary shot for a whole scene. Transitions to different shot sizes are very gradual. Zooms are viewed as an unnatural progression and are rarely used by fifth- and sixth-generation directors.
- **Lateral tracking through landscape.** The return to traditions has meant that lateral tracking shots are often used. In these shots, the camera moves sideways on tracks past a landscape, revealing an expanding natural environment, rather like multifocal painting. Lateral tracking makes it possible to shift focus from one character and set of events to another, similar to unrolling an ancient scroll. However, lateral tracking can result in the *mise en scène* looking rather flat – it has length, but little depth.
- **Flat lighting.** The Beijing Film Academy's approach has been to use flat lighting rather than the traditional Hollywood studio style. They have not favoured sharply contrasted shafts of light in the low-key style. Flat lighting allows for a more neutral viewpoint from which audience members can take their own meaning from a scene.
- **Use of colour.** Drawing on the style of the ancient woodblock printers, Chinese filmmakers use primary colours to represent moods and to create episodes within a film. According to traditional Chinese cosmology, a colour can induce certain feelings. The meaning of the colour is not fixed – it can be changed by the content of the scene. For instance, in *Yellow Earth (1984)*, red at the beginning of the movie

Figure 13.7 *Beijing Bicycle* (2001) is a film from the sixth generation of Chinese filmmakers. It presents issues facing people in China today.

is a positive colour symbolising freedom. It is a masculine or 'yang' colour considered to be positive for males in the film, but in the scenes involving females it is considered to be negative.

- **Multifocal narration.** Chinese storytelling tradition is based on the same ancient world view as Chinese painting, says Hao Dazheng. The narrative technique is multifocal, with events and characters represented in parallel. In contrast, the Hollywood style more commonly places events in sequence, usually with one other subplot that joins the main plot at the resolution. Chinese narrative also tends to avoid descriptions of people's inner worlds. Instead, says Hao Dazheng, the movies try to affect the viewer through the plots and the vast scale of events.

Effect on Hollywood films

The Chinese government restricts the number of foreign films it allows into China. Because of this, Hollywood studios are engaging in co-productions with Chinese companies as these are not restricted by the quotas.

China is a highly profitable market for cinema. *Warcraft: The Beginning* (2016), the film adaptation of the digital game *World of Warcraft* (2004–), earned $25 million at the US box office on its opening week. The same film made $156 million on its opening week in China. Financially, it is very important to Hollywood studios to get films into China. This means Hollywood is including scenes that may appeal to the Chinese market.

Most of the highest grossing movies in Chinese cinemas are locally produced. For instance, *Avengers Endgame* (2019) is the only foreign film to make the top 10 highest grossing films in China. Even *Gladiator II* (2024) was easily beaten at the box office by locally produced Chinese films.

Chinese film

Some mainland Chinese films from the fifth- and sixth-generation directors are classified and available on release in Australia, as shown in Table 13.2.

Table 13.2 Chinese films classified and released in Australia

CHINESE FILM TITLE	DETAILS
Yellow Earth (1985)	The fifth-generation director Chen Kaige is well known in the west. *Yellow Earth* is regarded as the first film of the fifth generation. It is the film that demonstrated the new Chinese film language with its return to traditional national styles.
Farewell My Concubine (1993)	This movie, also by Chen Kaige, gives an overview of China's turbulent 20th-century history through the eyes of two stars of the Chinese Opera.
Beijing Bicycle (2001)	Wang Xiaoshuai, from the sixth generation of filmmakers, raises issues facing ordinary Chinese people as industrialisation rapidly changes their lives. The film pays homage to Vittorio De Sica's Italian neorealist film *Bicycle Thieves* (1948).
City of Life and Death (2009)	This film tells the story of the 1937 Japanese massacre of Chinese citizens at Nanking. The estimated death toll of this massacre is between 100 000 and 300 000.
Stray Dogs (2013)	This film by Tsai Ming-liang depicts the impoverishment of a family forced into homelessness. The film examines life in China as it industrialises but leaves some people behind.
Successor (2024)	Directed by Yan Fei and Peng Damo, *Successor* is a comedy drama about a wealthy family with an unconventional way of parenting that becomes an educational experiment. The film presents social issues such as class, privilege and bullying.

Influential Chinese directors

Jia Zhangke (1970–)

A leading sixth-generation filmmaker, Jia Zhangke combines fiction film and documentary elements in artistic ways. In his films, he highlights the

Figure 13.8 *A Touch of Sin* (2013) is a very violent film and represents a break from Jia Zhangke's earlier works. Recent violent incidents in China have been widely circulated on Weibo, the Chinese version of Twitter. The film is organised around four of those events and focuses on four very different characters.

Photo 12/Alamy Stock Photo

problems caused by globalisation. Jia's work tends to focus on the following aspects:

- alienation and social dislocation caused by industrialisation
- migrant worker experiences
- those who fall between the cracks
- weaving together of documentary and fiction elements
- occasional bizarre surrealist elements
- use of slow long takes
- use of extreme violence in his later films to highlight injustices.

Ning Hao (1977–)

Considered one of the most commercially successful directors in China today, Ning Hao graduated from the Beijing Film Academy in 2003. Ning has developed a very personal style. Well-known films include *Breakup Buddies* (2014), *No Man's Land* (2013) and *Guns and Roses* (2012). Some critics compare his movies to *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* (1998) or *Pulp Fiction* (1994). He is often satirical, as exemplified in *The Movie Emperor* (2023). His work focuses on the following aspects:

- black humour, as used in *Breakup Buddies* (2014)
- absurdism, as in *Crazy Alien* (2019)
- road movies (China is beginning to make these as the car becomes popular)
- greed
- violence.

13.3 ACTIVITIES

1   View a film made by a Chinese fifth-generation director and compare it with one made by a sixth-generation filmmaker. **Analyse** the differences you see in subject matter and in characterisation. Consider any similarities you see in filming style. Make judgements about the styles of the two generations.
2   Select a landscape shot from a well-known fifth-generation film, such as *Yellow Earth* (1985), and also select a landscape painting from traditional Chinese art. **Analyse** the two works, breaking each down into constituent parts and considering the similarities and differences. Make judgements about the relationship between the two art forms.
3   Select a contemporary Chinese film. **Evaluate** the film, referencing any use of the new Chinese film language (as outlined by critic Hao Dazheng, see page 182) and interpreting how the film applies the language. **Explain** your findings in a presentation to the class, showing excerpts of the film and identifying where it follows these conventions and where it breaks them.

LATIN-AMERICAN CINEMA

Third cinema (see page 176), a term used to describe revolutionary political films, originated in Latin America. However, greater commercialisation has meant that South American films are becoming more entertaining and less political. Mass mobilisation of the people to overthrow fascist governments is less often the goal of modern films. This is partly because of the slow spread of democracy in South America since the beginning of the 21st century, says Latin American film specialist B. Ruby Rich.

Latin-American film refers to the films of the 20 countries within continental South America and Central America, and the nearby Hispanic islands of the Caribbean. The region is called Latin America because the primary languages spoken are Spanish and Portuguese. These are European languages descended from Latin – the language of the ancient Roman Empire.

Many Latin-American countries do not have longstanding, internationally recognised film industries. The key film industries of South America are located in the larger countries, such as Mexico, Brazil, Chile, Argentina and Cuba.

Context in Latin-American cinema

Many of the nations of South America have had similar histories and shared social problems. The continent is torn by class conflict and huge gaps between rich and poor. Dictatorships and corrupt governments have been common. Drug cartels and organised crime have created further problems in some countries.

Cuba

In 1959, the US-supported dictatorship in Cuba was overthrown by a communist revolution led by Fidel Castro and Che Guevara. Castro became President and, facing hostility from the US, formed an anti-US alliance with the Soviet Union. Moscow provided funds to Cuba – partly in return for a base close to the US. With state funding, the Cuban film industry thrived. Cubans had always been avid cinema-goers, and attendances at film theatres provided a strong support base for the industry. Cuban films became a significant force in Latin America. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 plunged Cuba into an economic crisis aggravated by the continuing US trade ban. Funding for films stopped. Now, only between four and 12 films are

'There is an international division in cinema. Hollywood administers entertainment, Europe art, and Latin America social conscience.'

Ambrosio Fornet, Cuban film critic and scriptwriter

produced in Cuba each year. Among the best-known Cuban films are *Memories of Underdevelopment* (1968), *Strawberry and Chocolate* (1993) and *Guantanamera* (1995).

Mexico

In 2000, Mexico became a democracy after 71 years of one-party rule. The Mexican film industry is the most productive and wealthiest in Latin America. It provides competition with nearby Hollywood for the Spanish-speaking audiences of Latin America and the southern US. At its peak in the 1960s, the Mexican industry was producing hundreds of films each year. Whereas many Latin-American filmmakers rely on state funding, most Mexican films are commercially funded. Three Mexican films have been highly successful in the English-speaking world: *Like Water for Chocolate* (1992), *Amores Perros* (2000) and *Y Tu Mamá También* (R-rated, 2001).
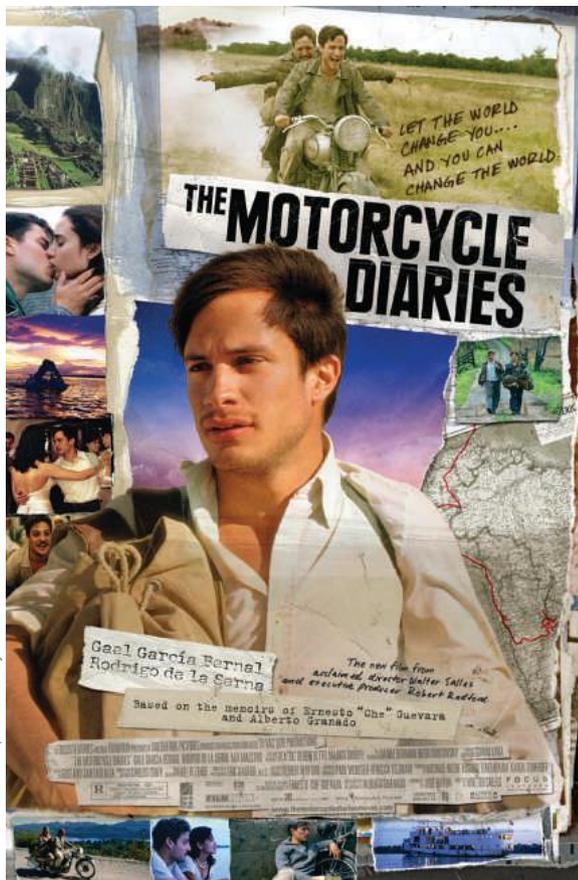
Figure 13.9 Third cinema, meaning revolutionary political films, is a term first used in Latin America. *The Motorcycle Diaries* (2004) traces the early adventures of the Cuban revolutionary, Che Guevara.

Chile

Chile had a democratic tradition but fell under the military regime of General Augusto Pinochet in 1973. Thousands were killed in the brutal intimidation exercises that followed. When his dictatorship ended in early 1990, Chile began its slow transition back to democracy. However, Pinochet had effectively destroyed the film industry. During the Pinochet years, many filmmakers continued to work in exile. After Pinochet, film became an important therapy for the nation, as tragic stories that had been suppressed for 17 years were told for the first time. Two of the most successful films from this time are *The Frontier* (1991) and *Amnesia* (1994).

Argentina

Once a wealthy country like Australia, Argentina was ruled by various forms of civilian and military dictatorship from the 1930s until just after the Falklands War in 1983. Currency troubles, hyperinflation and a huge international debt have led to great poverty and social unrest in Argentina. The country's film industry is small, but it has had success at international art-house festivals. Juan José Campanella is internationally widely known, and Gastón Duprat and Mariano Cohn are two collaborating film directors and producers who have also created many art-house films. *The Man Next Door* (2009) is their most famous on the international festival circuit.

Brazil

Brazil, now a democracy, was once controlled by various military dictatorships from the 1930s. The most recent military government held power from 1964 until 1985. Brazil is the largest South American country and also has the largest Catholic population in the world. Great poverty exists side by side with great wealth. Apart from sub-Saharan Africa, Brazil has the most unequal distribution of wealth in the world. About 10 per cent of the population owns half the wealth of the country.

For most of Brazil's history, film production has been sponsored by the state and subject to strict censorship. After a disastrous collapse in the 1990s, the film industry has been revived with increased private investment. About 35 to 40 films are made each year, but production levels vary. A recent Brazilian film that was widely distributed in English-speaking countries is *Central Station* (1998).

Figure 13.10 *Central Station (1998)* features a real street child as the lead actor. The former shoeshine boy turned actor used the success of the film to help other abandoned children he had left behind.

Features of Latin-American cinema

Many of the following features appear in Latin-American films:

- **Magical realism.** A popular style in Latin-American literature and film, magical realism combines everyday reality with supernatural events. Spirituality, folklore and legend merge with the physical world to create a 'magical' reality. Characters seem to accept both real and magical events as of equal significance. For instance, in *Like Water for Chocolate* (1991), Tita's cookery has magical powers of seduction.

- **Social realism.** Many Latin-American filmmakers have used the social realist style (see 'film movements', (Chapter 11, page 142) to focus on the political and social realities of life for the vast numbers of poor in South America. Casting non-professional actors in these films, such as the street children in *Central Station* (1998), adds to the social realism.

- **Historical themes.** With more than 500 years of interaction between Spanish and Portuguese Europeans and Indigenous South Americans (Amerindians), historical themes are a common feature of Latin-American films. Films focus on stories of the ancient cultures of the Aztecs and Incas, Amerindian folklore and stories of revolutions and political events. There are perhaps two main reasons for this focus on history: (1) the distance from current

political events makes historical subjects safer territory for state-sponsored filmmakers and (2) traumatised societies need to come to terms with their troubled histories to move on.

- **Religion.** Latin America has the world's largest Catholic population and a growing evangelical Christian presence. Some film critics say religion is a popular theme because these communities have been abandoned for so long they no longer expect anything from Earthly powers.

- **Gender and families.** Critics note variations among Latin-American countries, but a concern with families and gender relations is a common theme. Charles Ramírez Berg argues that recent Mexican cinema represents masculinity in crisis. Traditional machismo has been shattered, and films seek to redefine masculinity. Often, women are portrayed as victims in this crisis. Sometimes the figure of an absent or failed father may symbolically represent the failure of the government or the state. In Brazilian film, children are used symbolically, says Ismail Xavier. 'They feature as an innocence not yet polluted, but about to be if society continues to be what it is.' This idea can be seen in *Central Station*.

- **Economic and political themes.** These themes are never far from the surface in Latin-American films, even if they appear in a disguised form. Directors often see filmmaking as a chance to send a political message. Many films have dealt with:
  - social class and the huge gap between rich and poor
  - economic policies that disadvantage the poor
  - national interest versus US business imperialism
  - corrupt or incompetent government agencies
  - the cruel and ruthless growth of cities and urban slums
  - consumerism and greed that is valued over human life
  - brutal intimidation, whether by governments or by drug cartels
  - organised crime.

Latin-American movies

Table 13.3 Latin-American films classified and available in Australia

LATIN-AMERICAN FILM TITLE	DETAILS
Like Water for Chocolate (1992)	This is a romance movie in the magical realist style. The film is set during the Mexican Revolution (1910–17). Although it has been one of the most successful Mexican films ever, critics say the movie masks the problems of life during the 1990s by focusing on a safe and conservative past. The film was sponsored by the Salinas regime during the time of one-party rule.
Central Station (1998)	Unlike earlier films, *Central Station* deals with the abandoned children of Brazil in a positive way within the social realist style. The lead character, a nine-year-old boy, is offered hope by a mother figure who saves him from the fate of most street children. Through the boy's journey, the movie also offers hope of reconstruction for Brazil. In real life, the former shoeshine boy-turned-actor used the success of the film to help other abandoned children he had left behind.
The Motorcycle Diaries (2004)	Based on an Argentinean book, this film is a co-production starring several well-known Latin-American actors. Officially the film is Brazilian. It is a road movie that recounts the early adventures of freedom fighter Ernesto 'Che' Guevara, one of the leaders of the Cuban revolution. His experiences as a young man on a motorcycle trip through South America sow the seeds of his revolutionary ideals.
Litigante (2018)	A public sector lawyer and single mother deals with a major corruption scandal and a mother dying of cancer. *Litigante* is a Colombian-French co-production.

A.F. Archive/Alamy Stock Photo
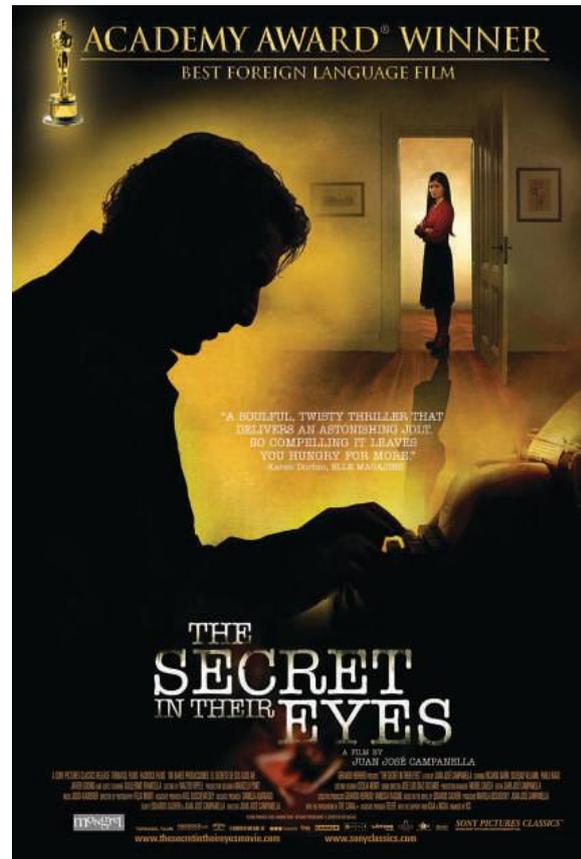
Figure 13.11 Argentinean filmmaker Juan Jose Campanella's film *The Secret in their Eyes* (2009) has been likened to a contemporary *film noir*. The film is set in two time periods: in 1974 during a time of great political unrest, and in 1999 as human-rights abusers from the 1970s and 1980s were granted pardons.

Influential Latin-American directors

Juan Jose Campanella (1959–)

Argentinian filmmaker Juan Jose Campanella is a well-known director in Argentina and throughout Latin America. He began studying as an engineer, but reportedly switched to a career in film after watching *All That Jazz* (1979) shortly before completing his degree. His films are not regarded as experimental, but nor are they standard commercial products. They tend to exhibit the following features:

- high production values with traditional Hollywood continuity editing (see Chapter 11, page 149).
- the use of genre – for example, his film *The Secret in Their Eyes* (2009) has been described as 'Argentinean noir'

- concerns with injustice, and repressive and violent governments
- themes of memory and looking back
- black humour, as in *The Weasels Tale* (2019).

Ciro Guerra (1981–)

Colombian filmmaker Ciro Guerra made his breakthrough with *Embrace of the Serpent* (2015), set in the Amazon. Guerra focused on the jungle because it used to represent half of the country of Colombia and contained many different cultures. Much of it has gone now. Guerra's films have dealt with the following themes:

- mythology and mysticism
- pre-history and encounters with westerners
- Indigenous peoples and remote locations.

13.4 ACTIVITIES

1   Select a Latin-American film you have access to. **Describe** the concerns the film raises, providing additional information about them beyond what is in the film, and report to the class on each situation. **Evaluate** its status as a film that addresses social and political concerns. Interpret the point of view in the film and whether the film presents a sense of hope about the situation. **Evaluate** the extent to which improvements have been made since the time in which the film was set.

2   View a Latin-American film that uses the magical realist style. Describe the use of symbolism in the film and identify the ways in which the fantastical elements are woven into the narrative. **Analyse** the amount of time the film spends exploring human emotion, expressing this as a proportion of total time. Consider to what extent the film uses folklore as a basis. **Explain** the folklore basis of the magical element, using the internet to provide additional information and researched examples.

3   Use the internet to research the funding received by a Latin-American film of your choice. **Analyse** the nature of the funding, identifying whether the film has been funded by state or commercial funding (or both). **Analyse** the themes in the film, breaking them down into constituent parts that reveal the points of view the film is taking. **Evaluate** the significance of the funding source, making judgements on the extent to which the funding source may have influenced the themes of the film. For films that have international funding, consider what world audiences may expect in a South American film. Draw conclusions about how this may have influenced the filmmakers.

IRANIAN CINEMA

Iranian cinema has grown to become recognised globally, carrying as much critical weight as French and Italian cinema. Its work is described as highly engaging and challenging in its representation of everyday life in Iran.

Iranian cinema refers to film works that are filmed and produced in Iran. Stories often feature life under the rule of a conservative religious government.

Cultural context

Iranian cinema developed shortly after the Islamic revolution era of the late-1970s. The newly established government supported the idea of a film industry and enabled filmmaking to develop under the new government of Ayatollah Khomeini. Although the Iranian cinema was free to film stories, there was a significant constraint imposed by the government. These constraints were all informed by the fundamentalist religious context of the nation.

Representation of public and private life was heavily scrutinised and shaped in accordance with religious instruction. Iranian films are prohibited from representing any physical contact between men and women, including romantic intimacy. Female characters must wear a veil with traditional dress. Most importantly, there are to be no representations of criticism set against the prevailing government.

Features of Iranian cinema

Many of the features of Iranian cinema evolved in response to the government's constraints. These features then enabled film to explore contemporary Iranian social reality in more subtle ways.

- **Poetic realism.** The influence of Italian neorealism and French New Wave on Iranian filmmaking cannot be ignored. Stories often draw on realist aspects either through social content (where unfolding action reflects real life) or through aesthetics (where the image is afforded some kind of style to resemble real life). Realism is also given a poetic slant in Iranian film by directors who merge creative intent with various representations. The colours of objects around a character might change to indicate a psychological state – for example, a cart of fruit might turn grey. The shot is no longer objective in the sense of classic realism but is a vision of sorts, originating from the character.

- **Static imagery.** The use of the long-held freeze frame is a common device in Iranian cinema. This is a simple device that usually appears as the closing image of a film. It is executed through a fade to black. The shot usually features the lead character in the middle of an action or in accentuated movement. As a device, this kind of shot comes from French New Wave, seen famously in François Truffaut's *The 400 Blows* (1959). The purpose of the shot was to represent a fracturing of everyday life – a kind of 'de-dramatisation' by freezing it for contemplation.

- **Disconnected spaces.** Many Iranian films feature a quest through mundane and realistic locations. The journey is often described as a meandering itinerary, which changes locations to be more like disconnected or unrelated spaces. Cinematography is used to hide the geography of the **diegesis**, so it becomes difficult for the viewer to tell where action is specifically unfolding. Yet as the film progresses, the locations shift and change aesthetically. The ways in which characters become lost in this zone are sometimes connected to an overt political commentary.

Iranian movies

Table 13.4 Iranian films classified and available in Australia

IRANIAN FILM TITLE	DETAILS
The Runner (1984)	Amir Naderi's film *The Runner* features a story about a young boy who, while struggling to make ends meet, expresses joy in his passion for running. Simple in nature and execution, the film became celebrated. Comparisons were drawn with Italian neorealism through its use of untrained actors and gritty realist aesthetics.
Where Is the Friend's Home? (1987)	This film is a tale of schoolboy Ahmed's quest to return a homework book to his friend Mohamed. Abbas Kiarostami's story of mistaken property is simplistic yet visually arresting in its execution and delivery. Knowing that the teacher will expel Mohamed for doing his homework in the wrong book, Ahmed sets out on a quest across his hometown to return the homework book to its rightful owner. The film features many scenes of Ahmed running up and down the screen in a random manner, representing the haphazard life of some Iranians.
A Separation (2011)	This Academy Award-winning film by Asghar Farhadi is about a middle-class marriage breakdown and the fallout that lands on the innocence of their daughter. The film is often praised for its simple premise yet complex delivery in narrative and in the subtext. The characters are quite richly portrayed through moral, social and psychological dimensions. In so doing, the film casts a spotlight on an often overlooked side of Iranian everyday life.
The Salesman (2016)	A young couple are rehearsing for a production of American playwright Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. The house they are in begins to crumble around them – a metaphor for Iranian society. The film depicts the conflicts that women in modern Iran face. It examines the social and religious roles that are gradually changing, even though it is from within an oppressive society.
Hit the Road (2021)	This film focuses on a family going on a road trip to help their eldest son escape from Iran. The film shows the huge challenges facing the people of Iran and the precarious situation in which they live.

Influential Iranian directors

Asghar Farhadi (1972–)

Asghar Farhadi is possibly Iran's most successful filmmaker with films such as *The Salesman* (2016) and *A Separation* (2011). Farhadi has received numerous film awards including two Academy Awards for Best Foreign Language Film. The thematic content of his work primarily focuses on social and class structures, expressed in the context of Iran, as well as religion. Films such as *A Hero* (2021) add a moral dimension to his portrayal of Iranian life. His style comes from using editing techniques such as cross-cutting and tonal montage to interrogate the relations among class and gender in social contexts. The mixture of imagery creates a kind of disorientation that acts as a commentary on certain aspects of Iranian everyday life.

Weblink
Best Iranian movies for streaming

Photo 12/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 13.12 In *The Salesman* (2016), a couple rehearse a version of the American play *Death of a Salesman* but in real life an assault happens and their lives are dramatically changed. The film is a story within a story that portrays social issues within Iranian society in an indirect way.

Abbas Kiarostami (1940–2016)

Abbas Kiarostami received many awards for his work, including the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival for *Taste of Cherry* (1997). His style of storytelling differed from one film to the next. However, he had a tendency to use child protagonists, rural village settings and a preference for shooting conversation in cramped spaces, such as the inside of a car. His stylistic approach was very smooth and graceful, making use of tripods for cinematography quite frequently, as well as drawing on documentary-style shooting for realism. His work is characterised in terms of a contemplation of Iranian life that stems from the use of carefully designed stylistic imagery.

Tahmineh Milani (1960–)

Some filmmakers have been jailed for their work. Female filmmaker Tahmineh Milani was arrested and charged for her film *The Hidden Half* (2001), which questioned the government. She was also responsible for other breaches of filmmaking constraints by telling stories about couples who resort to crime to survive their social conditions, and a couple out of wedlock being represented as living together in a romantic relationship. Much of her directorial identity is shaped around the political conditions of Iran. Her films raise questions about the rules imposed by religion in everyday life, suggesting that the current restrictions are unfair. For instance, her 2017 film *Untaken Paths* deals with the issue of domestic violence against women. Her style is informed by realism, forgoing lavish cinematography for a grittier handheld approach to the visual image. In this way, she draws connections between the imagined world of her stories and actual lived experience.

13.5 ACTIVITIES

1   Imagine Australia is the 'back lot' for the production of a film by a crew from Iran. You are the director. **Create** a 'pitch' for the film that follows many of the conventions of the Iranian national cinema and deals with familiar themes. **Outline** the planned narrative and some of the complications.

Describe how the traditions of the national cinema will be explored in fresh ways. Identify the conventions of film language and the stylistic production elements you will use to communicate with the home audience. Identify the locations you will use and clarify how these will be acceptable to an audience 'back home'.

Create a workplace health and safety risk management plan. **Explain** how any action sequences will be fully supervised.

Resolve the production, filming it and editing it into a resolved moving-image media product. Solve any technical or creative problems you encounter as you go.

SPACED PRACTICE

Stimulus: Bheem and Ram meet to save a small child from danger in the Bollywood film *RRR* (2022).

Contextual information: In this sequence, Bheem and Ram meet to save a small child from certain danger. This sequence was filmed with a combination of stunt work and computer-generated imagery (CGI).

Question (Key concept – Technologies): Analyse how *RRR* (2022) has manipulated technologies to build tension. **Evaluate** the effectiveness of the use of CGI for Western audiences. **Justify** your response with examples from the sequence.

Weblink
Bheem and Ram Meet – RRR – Netflix Philippines

Resource
Scaffolding

14 Ideas and pre-production for stylistic film

GENERATING IDEAS FOR STYLISTIC PRODUCTIONS

The concept stage focuses on ideas before the actual planning phase. Documenting ideas, good and bad, will progress the concept. Ideas usually take time to develop and strategies such as doodling and daydreaming can often contribute to the gradual process of the concept stage.

Idea generation

Originality can be considered as the combining of existing ideas in new ways. Most inventions and artworks do not start from scratch. They often build on the achievements of others in innovative ways. This is part of the context of their production.

Filmmakers can produce artistry through innovative combinations of existing elements.

Cinematic/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 14.1 *Flash of Genius* (2008) recounts a battle between the inventor of the intermittent windscreen wiper and the multinational company who claimed it was not a new invention because it was built from widely available 1960s electronics. Representing himself in court, the inventor demonstrates that existing materials can be used to create something new. He argues to the judge that famous writer, Charles Dickens, used no new words in his classic novel but the artistry came from rearranging them in a new pattern.

Weblink
Flash of Genius (2008): new inventions scene

Components of screen storytelling, such as shots, do not need to be original to form part of an original combination which reflects the filmmaker's own artistic identity. Director and cinematographer, Warwick Thornton, says he is a firm believer in copying the films you love until you love your own films, your own voice.

Starting the ideas process (not waiting for the event)

If all humans are storytellers, you are likely to have a great idea waiting to be shared. Following is a list of strategies used by writers to stimulate their imaginations:

- **Start with what you know best.** Your place in the world may give you something to say. Experiences can be represented in realistic or symbolic ways.
- **'I believe' technique.** Make a list of statements relating to the topic that begin with 'I believe …'
- **Brain dump.** This is also known as 'word vomit'. Set yourself a time limit and write anything and everything that comes into your head. This shows you what is top of your mind. Then scan to group cohesive ideas.
- **Interrogation technique.** Ask yourself a series of 'what if', 'if only' or 'why' questions. Make serious and ridiculous questions. Often absurdity stimulates other ideas.
- **Google.** Search the internet for some words from your topic to see what the algorithms come up with.
- **AI prompt.** Be aware that AI searches or prompts may give a different result each time. While results will be within limited constraints despite appearing creative, they may spark further creativity for the filmmaker.
- **Crowd sourcing.** Crowd sourcing is a modern term for getting the answer using social media. Smaller groups can be just as effective at generating ideas. Assemble a group of friends

with very different personalities – for example, a funny person, a thinker, a sociable person, a quiet person and so on. Get their help to come up with an idea.

- **One sentence technique.** Write a one-sentence idea on a card, moving quickly without thinking too much.
- **Dada poetry.** Generate a random set of words as practised by artists in the Dada movement. Arrange in an order that suggests a plausible screen idea, seizing on surreal combinations which may occur.
- **Other media examples.** Make a list of all the television shows and movies you can think of that are related to the topic. Beside the titles, write the angle or premise they have used. List an alternative angle on each topic.

14.1 ACTIVITIES

Experiment using at least five of the 10 strategies in the 'Starting the ideas process' section for your project. Place the three most promising ideas into a column with specifics added. Place the weaker ideas in a column to return to if they are needed to trigger further development.

CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT AND CREATIVITY THEORY

Edward de Bono helped change the way the world thinks with his research into creative thinking. The concepts he developed are widely known.

Vertical and lateral thinking

De Bono argues that there are two sorts of thinking processes in creativity: vertical and lateral. Both are useful and of equal value.

Vertical thinking

Logical step-by-step thinking was labelled 'vertical thinking' by de Bono. Vertical thinking is the kind used in mathematics. It is rules-based, and often looks for a right or wrong answer. Vertical thinking uses logic to think in a sequence and arrive at a predictable conclusion. Experts say that vertical thinking accounts for up to 90 per cent of people's thinking.

Vertical thinking allows for deadlines to be met and everyday tasks to be completed in efficient ways.

Lateral thinking

Taking in ideas and solutions from all over the place, using a kind of random creativity, is called 'lateral thinking' – a term developed by de Bono in 1967. He wrote several books about it. Lateral thinking does not follow the usual predictable thought patterns of vertical thinking; instead, lateral thinking is about gathering ideas from left of field. It can be inspirational because it seems as if the idea came from nowhere. However, lateral thoughts are usually connected in some way to the original stimulus – it is just that the connection is somewhat unusual or illogical. Lateral thinking looks at the world from a number of perspectives.
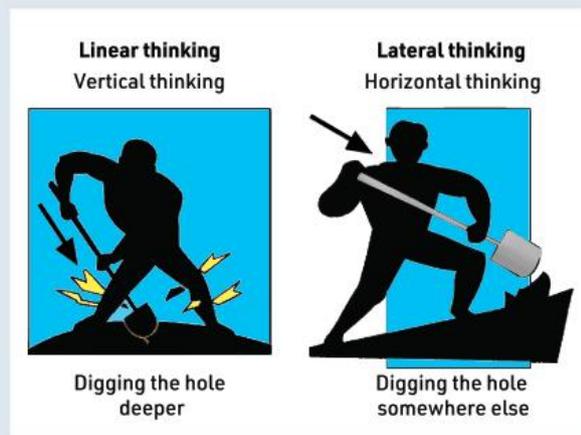
Figure 14.2 Edward de Bono explains vertical thinking and lateral thinking by referring to the different approaches as digging a hole. Vertical thinking pursues the objective single-mindedly and step by step, such as digging a single deep hole. Lateral thinking jumps around, looking at digging shallower holes in different locations. Neither lateral thinking nor vertical thinking is superior; they are simply different ways to think, each with advantages and drawbacks.

Using vertical and lateral thinking in media

Lateral and vertical thinking should be used to create 'real but unusual' media text ideas. According to screenwriting coach Linda Aronson, the process fits an analogy of driving a car: lateral thinking is the accelerator and vertical thinking is the brake. You need both the accelerator and the brake – you cannot drive without using both.
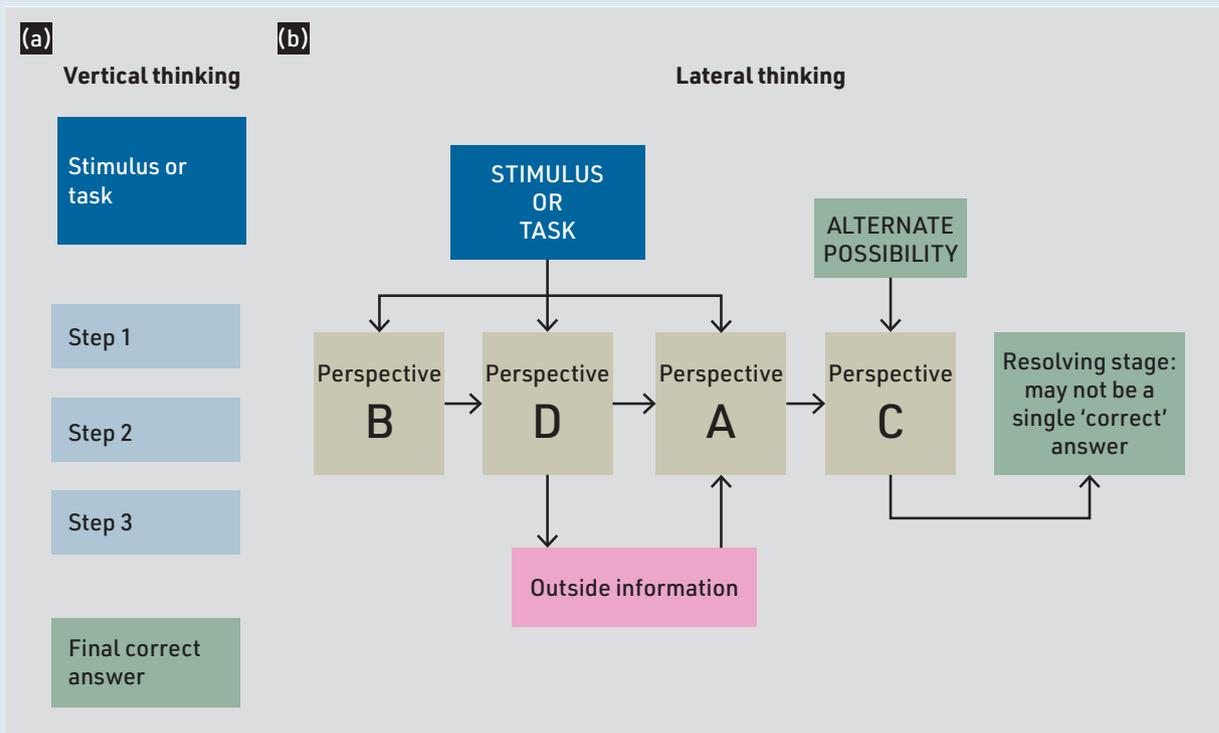
Figure 14.3 (a) Vertical thinking and **(b)** lateral thinking. Vertical thinking follows logically one step after another. Lateral thinking takes in many different perspectives and doesn't necessarily follow logical steps. It may consider emotional, disruptive, imaginative or unpredictable ideas. Both kinds of thinking are equally valuable. In the concept development process, it is a good idea to document your attempts at vertical and lateral thinking, and have a written summary as evidence of your ideation process.

Vertical thinking is good for:
- creating according to genres and patterns
- creating characters that are types or stereotypes
- making sure ideas are realistic
- checking that ideas are not clichéd or over the top
- working out what needs to be done.
  Lateral thinking is used for quite different tasks and is good for:
- coming up with new and unusual ideas
- coming up with lots of ideas
- finding the emotional core of an idea.

Six thinking hats

De Bono has six thinking hats, each one of a different colour for a different purpose. The idea behind the hats is to encourage particular types of thinking around an original idea (see Table 14.1).

Working with the six hats

Whether you are in an individual or group situation using the six hats, all thinking has to be determined by the colour of the hat. In a group, it might be a good idea to have a chairperson who manages the processes, perhaps by holding up a coloured card to indicate what thinking is being used. Most of the time is spent with the yellow, black and green hats. You will spend a smaller amount of time with the white hat. The red hat is often dealt with in brief bursts because emotions tend to change once they are spoken about for too long. The blue hat is for process/overview, and is only used when you are thinking about how you are using the six-hat method. The blue hat is used at the start and finish of the six hats session, when the ideas and stylistic elements should be recorded as evidence of the idea.

Table 14.1 De Bono's six hats of thinking. Putting on a hat of a different colour encourages a different type of thinking. Purposefully taking on a new perspective about an idea or problem forces you to think of alternatives.

HAT COLOUR		TYPE OF THINKING
Green hat		Creativity: • growth • new ideas • options
Yellow hat		Benefits: • logic • positive vision • feasibility
Blue hat		Overview: • control • decision • processes
Black hat		Critic: • risks • obstacles • caution
Red hat		Emotions: • feelings • hunches • intuition
White hat		Information: • facts • data

14.2 ACTIVITIES

1 **Experiment** with lateral thinking to come up with as many unusual ideas for your media text as you can. Start with a topic and name another topic that has only one thing in common with the first. Lateral thinking will draw in all sorts of thoughts. Choose three

of the ideas from your lateral thinking to develop using vertical thinking. Decide on a genre, with its conventions of technical and symbolic codes, and impose a logical sequence.

2 **Experiment** with new ideas in a small group by using the six thinking hats method. Use the blue hat to start and set rules. The six thinking hats method encourages parallel thinking. Hold up coloured cards and one idea each person has within that mode. Underline the best three for each thinking hat. **Select** the ideas that match a personal aesthetic and note how they may suit your context of production resourcing and intended use.

DEVELOPING IDEAS FOR STYLISTIC PRODUCTIONS

It is best to develop multiple ideas rather than choosing one too early. It can be difficult picking winners until the process is completed. Postpone judgement until after the development stage.

Developing stylistic elements

The following steps will help develop all your ideas.

Step 1: Brainstorming and mind mapping

- **Brainstorming.** This process originated in an advertising agency in 1939. Usually, it is a group process in which people are given a topic and they then call out ideas. No one should be critical of the ideas, and all ideas should be accepted. Brainstorming can also be done individually.
- **Mind mapping.** Usually, the idea being developed is placed in the centre of the diagram or map. Ideas then branch out from this centre point. This is sometimes called a spider diagram because of its web-like structure.
- **Screen spider-gram.** The oval in the centre is the initial concept. In the triangles, subconcepts are imagined as action for moving image

'Brainstorm means using the brain to storm a creative problem and to do so in commando fashion, with each stormer attacking the same objective.'

Alex Faickney Osborn, creator of brainstorming
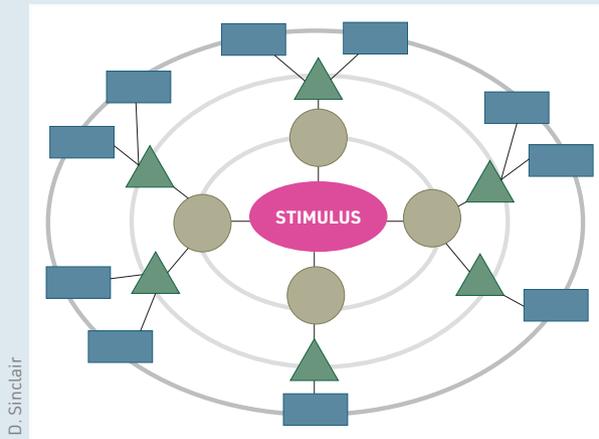
D. Sinclair

Figure 14.4 A *screen spider-gram* develops from the centre to arrive at image ideas. The surrounding circles in the first 'orbit' are different versions of the stimulus concept. From those, triangles in the second orbit describe the sub-concepts in action. Character types may be added with verbs that summarise a scene. In the final orbit, rectangles are the actual screen content. This should include technical and symbolic codes, but not what we cannot see or hear, such as emotions.

media contexts. Aspect ratio rectangles represent the ideas to put on screen. Visuals and other elements can be listed or converted into storyboard frames. A sequence of the visuals may be suggested by their relationship to each other. Showing consecutive rectangle content may give a predictable flow of logically similar images. Jumping from one rectangle to the opposite side of the diagram can bring interesting contrasts.

Step 2: The three Ws and one H

British media educators Nick Dimbleby, Richard Dimbleby and Ken Whittington say to ask four basic questions of your ideas:

- **Why?** Media productions are usually expected to educate, inform or entertain. Work out why you want to produce your idea.
- **What?** Ask yourself what content you want to put in your production. As time goes by, that may change.
- **Who?** For whom is the production going to be made? A sense of audience is the most important element to keep in mind all the way through the production.
- **How?** You will need to explain how you are going to present the text to the audience. Technical matters can be added here to further develop the ideas.

Step 3: Considering genre and stylistics

Genre can be useful for developing ideas because genres are repeatable. You will have seen many genre examples, which can act as models.

Genres have a step-by-step structure. Recall what you know of this structure because it has developed around similar concepts to your own. For example, consider settings, typical characters, plot sequences, openings and resolutions.

Use each aspect of the genre structure to stimulate thoughts about what you could do with your own idea. For example, what settings and characters would you expect? Use a table to express your one idea as three different genres and their features.

Twist the genre by challenging expectations to further stimulate your ideas, avoiding typical examples.

Step 4: Laying out the ideas

Time-based media productions (such as video) and static media (such as print) are based on a sequence. These can benefit from physically laying out the ideas on cards and moving them to achieve the best order. Paper or light cardboard is best for this – they have a flexibility and ease of use that is more difficult to achieve on a computer.

1. Take all the ideas for scenes and place each one on a card of its own.
2. Lay them all out in the planned sequence as a vertical storyboard – top to bottom. Move the cards around until you think you have the best order. Experiment with staggering the cards left or right for simultaneous time that switches between locations. Examine the pace of the planned cross-cutting.
3. Look for gaps or places where the audience may become confused. Create new cards to span the gaps or add establishing shots or transitions.
4. Check that you have good start and finish cards and a few other memorable 'postcard shots' that sum up significant scenes. Take photos of the layout as evidence of your idea.
5. Draft these few key moments in your pre-production format – script or storyboard. Before finalising technical and symbolic codes and linking scenes, ensure stylistic ideas use screen representations and languages to suit the context. Use the following section

> 'If you want to have good ideas, you must have many ideas. Most of them will be wrong, and what you have to learn is which ones to throw away.'
>
> **Linus Pauling**, Nobel Prize winner, quantum chemist, and founder of molecular biology

(see 'Designing for a stylistic aesthetic') to make stylistic choices before embedding them into pre-production formats or Statements of Intent.

With stylistic influences clarified, incorporate technologies and processes which present a chance to demonstrate skill and mastery. Select production practices, processes and ideas according to personal artistic identity before describing them in planning documents. These may include sets, locations and costumes, lighting, composition, camera techniques, metaphor and other figurative language, symbolism, abstraction and editing.

14.3 ACTIVITIES

Use the four 'developing ideas' steps on your own concepts. **Develop** at least one of them as a *screen spider-gram* (see Figure 14.4), using the final rectangles of visual ideas to **design** a series of cards for step four.

DESIGNING FOR A STYLISTIC AESTHETIC

Critics have grouped visual artists (such as painters) into movements according to styles, giving clear cues to identify influences. Films can also be grouped according to movements (see Chapters 11 and 12) with common features. The visual and other creative arts are sources of influence and inspiration for filmmakers and new media designers.

Steps to a stylistic aesthetic and areas of artistry

The stylistic design of a production in film, animation or as a digital game is a result of deliberate decision-making by key personnel in the crew. Aesthetic choices may be dominated by the primacy of the visual frame but can also include other elements, such as sound.

Everett Collection Inc/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 14.5 Vincent van Gogh's painting style was copied in the world's first fully painted feature film, *Loving Vincent* (2017). Directors Dorota Kobiela and Hugh Welchman managed a 'factory' of painters to tell the artist's life story. Each frame in the film is an oil painting, executed in his distinctive style (as seen in van Gogh's *Self-portrait*, 1889). The film narrative is an animation of 6500 still images.

Artistry in sound design comes from a cohesive and deliberate approach to all aspects of the audio (see *Film, Television and New Media, QCE Units 1 & 2*, page 87). Award winning Australian screen composer Amanda Brown says that screen musicians' work often places melody elements between moments of dialogue, to avoid competing for attention. Brown says composers will analyse an actor's voice, leaving those frequencies free in their choice of orchestration. She brings a library of cues to support the narrative purpose of the production.

The art department of a production may build sets or generate an AI background to elevate the impact of the visuals. Non-linear forms, such as virtual reality environments or levels within digital games, may not have a fixed frame to communicate meaning; however, the placement and choice of virtual objects, lighting and colours still contributes to meaning and mood.

Costume and make-up believability can define the success of a narrative, particularly in fantasy, horror or science-fiction genres. Rick Baker won a record seven Academy Awards for his creature make-up artistry, beginning with *An American Werewolf in London* (1981). Physical make-up and costuming is still regarded as a key element of screen aesthetics, even in the digital era. *The Passion of the Christ: Resurrection – Chapter 1* (2026) extends on the first instalment from 2004. The film was controversial for its graphic use of make-up, which saw it rated MA15+ in Australia and R in the US (see *Nelson Film, Television & New Media, QCE Units 1 & 2*, page 356).

While some use the **director of photography** title interchangeably with cinematographer, the director of photography need not actually operate the camera and is assumed to have a level of control over the lighting provided by the **gaffer**. Just as a professional musician plays in various genres, a director of photography alters their stylistic approach for the demands of a particular production.

Step 1: Inspiration and experimentation

Artists are inspired by technologies, stylistic trends, ideas and issues. These should also be considered by screen artists. Students should experiment with physical objects during filming and lighting. They should also develop skills to explore digital

Figure 14.6 Australian director Mel Gibson on set with Jim Caviezel, who plays Jesus. The pair collaborated again for the 2026 sequel to *The Passion of the Christ* (2004), which still holds the inflation adjusted record for the top-grossing American R-rated film. Gibson felt the brutal violence captured by the make-up was essential to the story's authenticity.

Figure 14.7 Inspiration – shafts of light in the Australian bush by painter Frederick McCubbin, in his work, *Violet and gold* (1911), McCubbin produced iconic works of the Australian landscape that helped romanticise settlers in the native bush. He was heavily influenced by the French Impressionist Claude Monet's observation that 'Light is the chief sitter everywhere'.

potential, such as editing effects, filters and unusual transitions.

Russell Boyd's career is an example of this range of experimentation and inspiration. As director of photography, he says his passion is lighting. He offers simple tips for would-be filmmakers:

- Know how each scene is placed within the larger story.
- Watch rehearsals.
- Use lighting choices to create the mood.
- Talk through the look with the director, as directors of photography and cinematographers may manage more or less of the mood, depending on how the director likes to work.

Step 2: Production practices that suit the context of production and use

Resolving a production means it will give the audience an impression of completion, but also communicate meaning for its conceptual, creative or technical purpose. Students need to choose screen language to communicate representations to an audience, suitable for the particular context of the production.

Choose from your aesthetic repertoire to suit the project.

The diversity of Russell Boyd's international successes and iconic Australian 'looks' in many films demonstrates the selection of stylistic choice: *The Way Back* (2010), *Ghost Rider* (2007) and *Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World* (2003) were filmed in deserts, digital studios and on boats. Boyd's work on *Liar Liar* (1997) and *White Men Can't Jump* (1992) seem just as American as other US films.

Russell Boyd is one of the artists who helped define Australia's memory of itself and our place in the world through *Gallipoli* (1981), *The Year of Living Dangerously* (1982), *Crocodile Dundee* (1986), *Phar Lap* (1983) and *Blood Oath* (1990). He captures an indefinable 'haunting' of characters in both *The Last Wave* (1977) and *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975), leaving the impression of a brooding spirit over the continent. The diversity of Boyd's work can be seen in Figures 14.8 to 14.11.

Weblinks
Russell Boyd awards

Russell Boyd credits

Master and Commander (2003)

Ghost Rider (2007)

Figure 14.8 Experimentation – The film *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975) was visually inspired by the Australian Impressionist painters of the 1880s and 1890s Heidelberg School. Russell Boyd, the director of photography, captured an ethereal quality to the light by using a bridal veil over the lens, showing that simple experimentation with a physical solution can transform the effect of lighting.

Figure 14.10 Depth of field and costume separate elements in the dim, blue rainforest light in *Prisoners of the Sun*, (1990, also known as *Blood Oath*). Sharp focus foregrounds personal character experiences in the true story of a mass war crimes trial.

Figure 14.9 Wave and wind effects, ocean filming, fog and night shots were some of the challenges shooting *Master and Commander* (2003). Boyd won the Academy Award for Best Cinematography, again working with fellow Australian Peter Weir, director of *Picnic at Hanging Rock*.

Figure 14.11 Digital additions and dynamic moving camera shots are a feature of road scenes in *Ghost Rider* (2007). Boyd's career has spanned low-tech filming through material over the lens, to composing for invisible visual effects added in post-production. In *The Man From Hong Kong* (1975), stuntmen were on fire, while the Ghost Rider character is made of digital flames as his alter-ego state.

Step 3: Articulating a personalised artistic identity

Artistic identity can build from sources of inspiration, cultural background or the sum of previous works. Students should express their own artistic identity by contributing a personal style which comes not just from the aim of the project, but from who made it. By looking back on your visual proposals, you should be aware that choices of ideas, elements and processes grow from influences and inspiration.

Director Tim Burton provides an example of a consolidated stylistic aesthetic over many films. He incorporates themes, production practices and visual stylistics into the sequel movie, *Beetlejuice Beetlejuice* (2024). The first of his two Batman films (1989, 1992) re-invented the superhero genre, supported by his strong stylistic treatment of Gotham City. From his early experiments and short films, Burton's personal artistic identity appears to be cemented by the time he makes the original *Beetlejuice* (1988). He does not leave behind his early style experiments or themes. Rather he develops them. *Edward Scissorhands* (1990) and other films provide story excuses for bizarre characters and repeating Burton's exaggerated visuals.

Burton takes inspiration from the distortion of the German Expressionist films (see Chapter 11) *Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920) and *Nosferatu* (1922), a silent era vampire story directed by F.W. Murnau.

Weblink
Beetlejuice Beetlejuice (2024)

Tim Burton retrospective

Tim Burton credits

Corpse Bride (2010)

Edward Scissorhands (1990)

Entertainment Pictures/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 14.12 Tim Burton's *Beetlejuice Beetlejuice* (2024) includes distorted figures and animation, exploring death and altered bodies. Burton uses the narrative to justify these distorted visuals with supernatural themes. Similarities in his visual style and lighting design can be seen in his distinctive version of *Alice in Wonderland* (2010), *The Nightmare Before Christmas* (1993) and *Corpse Bride* (2010).

Omega Man (1971), featuring post-apocalyptic mutants, is also cited as one of many influences on Burton's childhood interest in the macabre.

14.4 ACTIVITIES

Create a timeline of productions from a filmmaker with a personalised artistic identity, such as Tim Burton. Select thumbnail images from works with commonalities in the stylistic aesthetic from a cinematographer or director. **Identify** the repeated elements that appear to be **consolidated** through their production practice.

VISUAL METAPHOR AND FIGURATIVE USE OF IMAGERY

Art forms convey meaning through signs, symbols, codes and conventions. These must be designed at the pre-production stage and can be taken directly from the idea development stage (previous section). Mastery of production technologies provides tools for media artists to communicate meaning.

In literature, figurative writing refers to something beyond the literal. Devices such as metaphors, similes, hyperbole, symbolism and personification add layers of inferred interpretation.

Screen language uses the equivalent of these to create a kind of 'figure of speech' that has a meaning beyond the literal words or shots themselves. Figurative imagery is when the visuals in the frame make a statement about a connected concept that we cannot see. This is a sophisticated use of media language. It can alter the representation of something on screen by overlaying additional meaning.

Metaphor is created when the audience understands the similarity between two different concepts. 'All the world is a stage' is a metaphor by William Shakespeare. It can easily be a simile by substituting '*is* a stage' for 'is *like* a stage.'

If the world *is* a stage, all human lives are affected by the idea. On screen, the difference between metaphor and simile could hinge on the strength of the connecting transitions. Forcing the audience to acknowledge that one thing *is* another thing has the power to drive home a serious issue.

Table 14.2 Figurative language and suggested screen equivalents. While simile and metaphor can play a very direct role in making meaning, other devices in refined editing can exploit a connection that is relatively shallow but improves visual flow.

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE		LITERARY DEFINITION	SCREEN EQUIVALENT
Common examples	Simile	Finds common aspects of two different things by saying one is 'like' the other.	Cutting between shots of two different subjects that are connected in some way.
	Metaphor	An imaginative claim that one thing 'is' another, made clear by common aspects of the two.	Cutting between shots of two distinct subjects using a graphic match in the transition to force direct comparison.
	Hyperbole	An extreme exaggeration to draw attention.	Using extreme shot sizes (such as ECU) and extreme camera angles (such as extreme HCA). Also using slow motion.
	Symbolism	An object or event represents something other than itself.	Motifs with internal story meaning of an image with external cultural readings, e.g. a flag at half-mast represents mourning a death.
Further examples	Alliteration	Starting consecutive words with the same sound.	Consecutive shots with different versions of the same kind of object, e.g. different makes of helicopters.
	Anaphora	Repeating the same word(s) to begin each clause.	Consecutive shots with the same direction and speed of camera or object movement.
	Antithesis	Two opposing ideas brought together.	Juxtaposition of contrasts such as safety and danger, rich and poor, or complementary colours.
	Assonance	Similar vowel sounds in the middle of consecutive words.	A particular colour theme embedded in a series of props, costumes or landscapes.
	Euphemism	Using substitute expressions to avoid content that may offend.	Clichés function as accepted vocabulary, such as cutting to fireworks after an extended kiss.
	Onomatopoeia	Words that describe sounds by approximately imitating them.	Substituting audio that approximates the genuine sound effect, such as a clanging gong synchronised with a hit to the head.
	Oxymoron	Terms that do not normally sit together, such as 'seriously funny'.	Characters and objects in incongruous settings, such as a Surrealist dream.
	Paradox	Self-contradictory statements such as 'fighting a war for peace'.	Contrapuntal sound, presenting an opposing emotion in the vision and the audio.
	Personification	Human qualities are used to describe inanimate objects.	Animation of various forms.
	Synecdoche (a form of metonymy)	One small sample of an activity or object represents the whole.	Close-ups without connective establishing shots, e.g. train wheels turning on the tracks represent the entire journey.

D. Sinclair

Digital support for the metaphor

The 2005 version of *War of the Worlds* features a series of **graphic matches** that play with scale on a leaf. One graphic match transition seems to say, 'one rain drop *is* a whole world of its own', and this is key to the plot. Without the metaphor, that's just one big leaf! Unlike in the famous graphic matches of Stanley Kubrick and Alfred Hitchcock, a high degree of accuracy in size and placement is achieved digitally. Film directors in the pre-digital era could not see their visuals on set. Even edit suites could not show real-time changes. The average film student can easily produce precise alignment the film founders could only dream of.

D. Sinclair

Figure 14.13 Skilful use of the graphic match in post-production. Shots can be zoomed, stretched and dragged to perfectly match an object of any scale. The giant 'X' sculpture behind the crowd in Mexico, as shown on the screens, can be aligned with an X from a naughts-and-crosses tabletop game. Key frames can be added to animate a moving graphic match during dissolves and pans.

Complicated graphics are not always needed to create a metaphor. *Parenthood* (1989) features a simple sound effect followed by a swaying motion of the camera as a father feels he has lost control. The analogy of a rollercoaster ride is clear in the scene from the technical codes. The power of the rollercoaster as a symbolic metaphor comes from an earlier monologue in the film that establishes Grandma's wisdom that 'life is like a rollercoaster'. Juxtapositioning of audio and a bland *mise en scène* can also produce sophisticated metaphor without graphic spectacle.

Shooting for metaphor and simile

Screen language dictates that consecutive shots are initially assumed to be related (see *Nelson*

Film, Television & New Media, QCE Units 1 & 2, Chapter 6). This can create a contrast or a simile, depending on which way the audience goes. Therefore, it is important to manipulate images for similarity if the intention is to create a visual metaphor. Technical and symbolic codes must support the preferred reading.

The juxtaposition of ageing human skin and tree bark implies a connection of longevity – perhaps experience or wisdom, even personification of the tree. Keeping the same colour and tones is suggesting the images sit together in a cohesive visual sentence, but the high contrast lighting creates a stronger link. The same patch of bark looks quite different due to manipulated location lighting to support the metaphor.

Figure 14.14 Skilfully rotating the frame of the tree bark in post-production makes the horizontal lines match the elderly person's forehead furrows. Selection of the high-contrast image of the bark (*left frame*) is also stylistic hyperbole, exaggerating texture.

Tim Gainey/Alamy Stock Photo
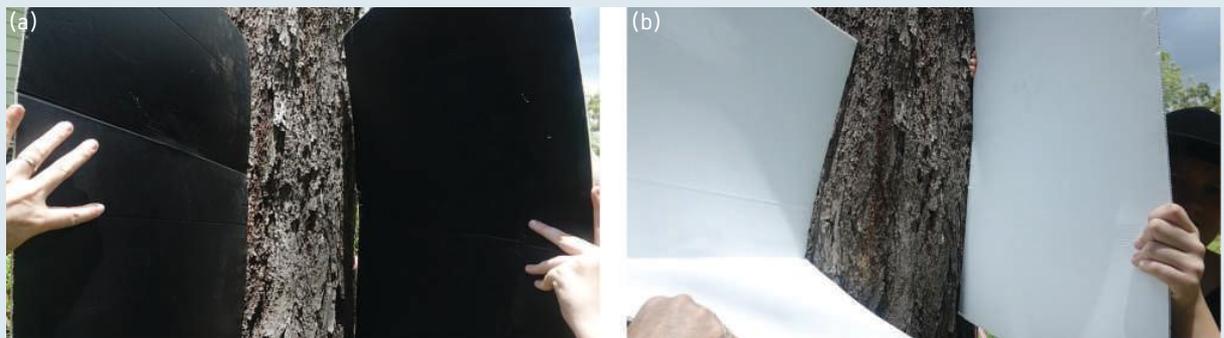
Figure 14.15 (a) Using black cutters exploits the directional lighting. It reduces sideways spill light by absorbing the bounce, turning the sun into a single-point key light. This exaggerates the texture. (b) White bounce-boards reflect daylight to soften the contrast and produce a 'nicer' image of the same patch of bark. However, reflectors are not desirable for this context of use as a simile for the old man's experience and wisdom.

D. Sinclair

Slow shutter speeds to create a blur of memory, creative use of focus or locations for filming can also create metaphor and simile.

Using symbolism

Symbols represent a meaning that has been translated from another context. The connection between the symbol and the meaning is constructed rather than natural. Written language is a set of agreed symbols that refer to spoken language, not because every letter looks like a sound it represents, but because there is an accepted system of meaning for each symbol on the page.

Relying on clichés and stereotypes is not all negative. It is an efficient way of communicating a common meaning that can save valuable screen time. Symbols that rely on external, cultural elements can provide a pre-programmed interpretation, although audience knowledge and age can disrupt or blunt the intended meaning. Familiar elements can be combined in novel ways to explore less predictable layers of meaning.

Surrealism as artistry

Combining people, places, events or ideas in irrational ways produces surreal imagery. These dream-like scenes can be highly symbolic. Surrealist painters Magritte and Dali produced strange combinations or seemingly infinite empty horizons of dream-like worlds.

These are conceptual places to ask philosophical questions, not just a real-world location.

Surrealism in locations

Narrative scenarios in any genre can provide opportunities for surrealism. *Inception* (2010) reveals a staircase illusion also found in the prints of artist MC Escher. *The Truman Show* (1998) has the character discover the edge of his world and talk to its creator as a voice in the sky before ascending his own stairway in the fake clouds.

Striking 'postcard' images that emerge from brainstorming and mind-mapping can form the heart of the production and determine locations (see 'Laying out the ideas', page 196).

D. Sinclair

Figure 14.16 Mastery of technologies and processes is demonstrated by perfect alignment of the graphic match, and a particular dissolve. Here, an **iris reveal transition** is used to dissolve an entire object over a section of the shot. The meaning of the media language alters the representation of each object. The accurate alignment helps push the simile into a metaphor. A precious book, open hands, direction of the bowl and objects themselves all carry meaning according to accepted signs, symbols and codes.

Pictorial Press Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 14.17 *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004) provides a narrative excuse for surreal imagery. Everyday life memories are recombined in irrational ways justified by the story.

Abstract elements

Weblinks
Inception (2010): infinite staircase Scene (Penrose Steps)

2001: A Space Odyssey (1968): star gate scene

Ballet Mecanique (1924)

An Andalusian Dog (1929)

Purely abstract visual art relies only on the elements of the work – the intention being to bypass references to objects in the real world. For example, abstract art can force the audience to respond to combinations of blue and white instead of a literal sky with clouds.

Film editors can identify connecting visual themes in seemingly random **rushes**. Found footage or unstructured filming still present suggestions of a rhythm than can be accentuated through selection and repetition. Abstract elements are often exploited in music videos to extend the emotional response to the audio track.

Abstract screens

An Andalusian Dog (1929), also known as *Un Chien Andalou*, is a film by Luis Buñuel with collaboration from Salvador Dalí. It was a Surrealist production that goes some way to being an abstract film.

Experiments in purely abstract film do not usually enjoy commercial success. The 'star gate' in *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) by Stanley Kubrick had a narrative excuse for the abstract segment.

14.5 ACTIVITIES

1 Use visual art movements as a basis for stylistic experimentation. Print out an image from a well-known art movement with a distinctive style. Attach it to a wall, as if in a gallery, and record a 60-second review of the artwork. Posing as a critic, describe the visual features of the movement. **Select** a combination of post-production effects to mimic the art movement. Increase the application of video effects during the recording as the art movement's painted effects are being discussed.

2 **Analyse** the work of an Australian director of photography with several films to their credit. View trailers or short clips of their moving-image media work in pairs to **examine** technical codes they have employed. Summarise their aesthetic choices and report back to the class about a variety of cinematographers or directors of photography.

PA Images/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 14.18 A woman looks at 'Blue Poles', 1952 by Jackson Pollock, during a photocall at the Royal Academy of Arts, London.

3   **Design** a storyboard frame and descriptions based on a figurative language screen equivalent in Table 14.2. Select one of your memorable 'postcard' shots from the laying out ideas step in the ideas development phase. **Identify** a suitable figurative language technique for your context. Fill in audio and shot details or adjacent shots and transitions using the screen equivalent descriptor. **Resolve** the storyboard frame(s) in the correct format, indicating technical and symbolic codes.

4   **Create** or record your own visuals with audio of an indoor object and an exterior which have some commonality of shape. **Arrange** them as consecutive shots within an editing application. Insert a gradual transition of some kind (i.e. not a hard cut). Adjust the scale and alignment of the overlapping images to **refine** the transition as a graphic match.

5   **Create** an abstract 1-minute exported music clip. Source out-takes from a previous production. **Identify** movement to copy and paste, producing rhythms. **Refine** the edit with jump cuts to repeat shots on a music beat. **Exploit** special effect filters to create abstracted colour and shape from the original footage. Sustain audience attention by adding an additional visual element every 15 seconds or so, and conclude with a crescendo in pace.

PRE-PRODUCTION FORMATS FOR STYLISTIC PRODUCTIONS

The type of pre-production format chosen for the stylistic production depends on several factors, such as the intended type or style of production, individual skillsets and personal preferences. Consider carefully which format works well to communicate your intended idea, including the chosen stylistic elements, representations, and technical and symbolic codes. Ensure you read the criteria of the task carefully and consult QCAA information about pre-production conventions.

Storyboards

Storyboards are communication and planning tools that show a visual breakdown of a production.

The filmmaking phrase 'show, don't tell' refers to telling the story through the visual elements of the medium, rather than relying on dialogue or voice-overs to explain everything. A storyboard is a useful way to check how the intended visuals will serve to elevate your production and create meaning for audiences.

Storyboards in Film, Television & New Media have detailed images and additional written descriptions to justify the intended use of technical and symbolic codes and conventions. In general, there will be more detail included in a storyboard for school assessment purposes than compared to storyboards in the media industry.

Ensure that the stylistic elements and influences of your intended production are evident in your storyboard, and that the written description supports the image by communicating the intended purpose of the design choices.

Effective storyboards do not have to be perfect illustrations, but rather communicate intentions clearly by capturing the mood, recognisable characters and composition of the shots.

When creating a storyboard for a stylistic project, consider the following conventions:

- **Technical codes:**
  - shot types, angles, camera movement and shot duration
  - sound and music
  - editing techniques and transitions
  - special effects – either practical or digital
  - ensure labelling and description of the shot matches the drawing
  - arrows for character or camera movement
  - shot composition and framing to create meaning and visual interest
  - variety in shot types
- **Symbolic codes**
  - Detailed images – don't forget backgrounds and other *mise-en-scène* elements
  - Representations of people – appearance inc. costume, hair and makeup, props
  - The acting – consider which 'freeze frame' of the shot works to communicate the meaning of that moment. How are the characters posed? What are their expressions?
  - Colour and lighting
  - Composition of *mise-en-scène* elements (inc. blocking of actors) within the shots
  - How the setting is represented

horst friedrichs/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 14.19 A storyboard for making the Harry Potter video games at Electronic Arts game development. In the media industries, black and white sketches may be suitable for storyboards and are often accompanied with 'concept art' to further illustrate symbolic codes. In Film, Television & New Media, additional written information and visual details are required to demonstrate an understanding of key concepts and communicate intended purpose.

Scripts/screenplays

Film scripts or screenplays lend themselves to moving-image media concepts with characters, dialogue and action. Traditionally, screenplays in the media industry focus on the story of the film and don't include many, if any, camera directions. However, some scripts by writer/directors, such as Quentin Tarantino, may include significant technical codes when a shot type is important to the scene. In the school context, it is necessary to include more detail about technical and symbolic codes in the scene and action description to show your understanding of the key concepts. For example, more detail for the setting and character description in a scene helps to clarify the intended *mise en scène*, and including some (not all) of the key camera directions can communicate important

technical information for significant moments in the production.

Scripts: three-column scripts

This format outlines the technical and creative aspects of the production in a table with three columns: Time, Vision and Audio. In general, each row of the table represents a single shot. The Vision column includes technical codes of shot types and other camera information, as well as symbolic codes describing the setting, lighting, costume and character action. This format also allows for additional information about special effects or post-production effects, such as colour grading. The Audio column includes the ambient sounds, dialogue, sound effects and music, both captured during filming and/or added during the editing process.

14.6 ACTIVITIES

1 Select one of the 'stylistic influences' you are considering for your Stylistic Project and choose a relevant production that shows the key stylistic techniques. **Identify** three key shots in a production and **design** storyboard sketches for those three shots. **Analyse** which film language elements are considered stylistic and ensure these elements are communicated clearly in your storyboard sketches.

2 Choose a short sequence from a media product of your chosen stylistic influence (such as 10 shots) and **design** a three-column script that represents the shots from that sequence. Aim for accurate description of shot types and angles, as well as *mise en scène* elements, such as setting, character appearance and staging. **Identify** the sound, music and dialogue in each shot to include in the audio column, and time the duration of each individual shot. **Evaluate** the effectiveness of your three-column script in terms of reflecting the finished product.

3 Research film scripts/screenplays, storyboards and other concept artwork from your chosen stylistic influence. **Analyse** how the pre-production formats outline the intended production and communicate meaning. **Evaluate** whether the stylistic elements are evident in the pre-production documents, and consider which additional details would be required if **designing** for an educational context.

SETTING OUT PRE-PRODUCTION FORMATS

Storyboard conventions

Storyboard formats are suited to productions dominated by visuals or the transitions between them, rather than long takes or lengthy dialogue.

Education storyboards

In education versions, a storyboard must guide production as a planning document for resolving stylistic choices and communicating intended purposes, through such additions to the industry format as explanation and justifications. Education versions also usually contain a risk management assessment and relevant safety precautions.

Artwork is not being assessed in education storyboards, but the communicative skills and understandings of codes and conventions *are* assessed.

Intended purpose in **technical and symbolic codes and conventions** demonstrates an understanding of the key concepts. It is usually set out in the following ways.

- In a justification and/ or intended purpose box under the storyboard image.
- In a paragraph on the title page of the storyboard.

Storyboard layout conventions include images and text.

The images

- What the camera will actually show on screen arranged in sequential shot order
- An indication of the background view or objects with a sense of depth or perspective
- Accurate visual depiction of the shot size and camera angle
- Aspect ratio that matches recording devices for planning visual composition
- Hand-drawn images are the most flexible and original method used by professionals
- One frame represents the entire length of a static (or minimal) movement shot
- Extended movement shots with several significant composition moments may be shown as the one shot number with a connecting vertical line between frames.

The text

- Each frame features shot number, shot size, duration, angle, camera movement, action description and dialogue. Scene numbers at the top are often used for multi-location narrative productions.
- Present-tense descriptions of the scene action
- Block capitals for characters' names, then lower case sample of dialogue
- Props and background elements significant to the action may be described

- Establishing shot descriptions may point out *mise en scène*, era and lighting mood in greater detail as the audience's first encounter of the location
- The default transition is a hard cut, and the default angle is eye-level
- The last shot detail is audio track and sound effects, followed by the transition, if needed.

Screenplay conventions

Screenwriters tend to adhere to standardised formats across the industry. These formats have evolved within the context of complex production purposes and are different to staged drama formats.

Education screenplays

In addition, education versions of screenplays must function as an assessment piece as well as a planning document. They communicate intended purposes through additions to the industry format.

Intended purpose can be communicated in the following ways.

- As a sidebar or annotation text box beside the script (refer example on page 210)
- As a descriptive introductory paragraph on the title page.

Codes and conventions can be explained as follows.

- *As a 'mark-up'*. Marked-up scripts are compatible with the industry format and provide a conventional way of adding explanations of the codes and conventions. Some way of differentiating the mark-up from the script helps the reader. Neat, handwritten notes or typed notes in a different font colour and in text boxes are the best ways.
- *In the side-bar*. Technical and symbolic codes can be included in the sidebar beside the script. Conventions, such as narrative structure, could also be indicated in the side-bar, at relevant points in the scenes. A sidebar allows for more detail to be given.
- *Embedded in the script text*. Technical codes and symbolic codes could alternatively be formally explained in the descriptions in a specific paragraph below the main scene description.

Screenplay layout conventions include the following:

- **Font**. Courier 12-point font to create consistency of letter size and spaces across the text.
- **Scene numbering**. Scene numbers in bold at the start and end of the scene heading, at an extended margin beyond the descriptive text alignment.
- **Scene headings**. Capitalised, bold scene headings, starting with INT (interior) or EXT (exterior), then the location in the scripted story world, then a hyphen before the approximate time of day in the story.
- **Verb tense**. Present tense descriptions of the visuals of a scene as the audience experiences them (not a summary of the scene) at the full margin width.
- **Capitals to draw crew and actors' attention**. Block capitals for characters in the scene, signs within the visuals and significant props when mentioned for the first time. Speaking characters' names in capitals at an almost centre aligned margin (not justified type setting).
- **Dialogue indented layout**. Dialogue in sentence case under the character name, on a narrowed LHS and RHS margin halfway between the character name and full margin and aligned to the left.
- **Character directions**. Specific character directions in parentheses under the character name in lower case, at a margin halfway between the character name alignment and the dialogue alignment.
- **Continuation**. The word 'continued' appears if dialogue is broken by a camera or direction instruction, or when a scene continues over the page.
- **Camera directions**. Camera directions don't usually appear in a screenplay. Occasionally, directions do appear if the narrative relies on a particular shot. They appear in bold capitals where shot sizes and movements may be given.
- **Transitions**. The default transition is assumed to be a hard cut, which is sometimes noted. 'CUT TO:' Other transitions include 'FADE IN:' and 'DISSOLVE TO:'. Transitions are placed at the extreme right-hand edge of the descriptive text margin.

Three-column script conventions

Two- or three-column scripts are predominantly used in news and documentary production. Narrative or expressive productions may suit this scripting format when specific shots and lengths need to be described and numbered.

Education three-column scripts

The three-column script in education has to function as an assessment piece as well as a script. The three columns provide for more flexibility and can provide more specific shot details and timing than a screenplay can."

Intended purpose can be communicated as follows.

- As a descriptive paragraph just above the three-column table
- As a separate entry in a side-bar of annotation textbox (refer example on page 211).

Codes and conventions can be explained as follows.

- *Embedded within the format.* Codes and conventions can be explained in the script itself within the video and audio columns, but not necessarily into every shot.
- *In the side-bar.* Technical and symbolic codes can be included in the sidebar beside the script.

Three-column scripts fitting contemporary practice for Queensland commercial broadcast television use the following format features.

- **Three columns.** The format has a narrow first column headed 'Time', followed by two equal sized columns. In block capitals, the second column is headed 'Video' or sometimes 'Vision', and the third column is headed 'Audio'.
- **'Time' column.** The time column shows the cumulative running total at the start of each shot (as a small width, left-hand column)
- **'Vision column'.** The video or vision column contains shot descriptions that give details of shot size, camera directions, shot numbers, graphics and any file footage ID. Video and Audio are described in horizontally aligned sections or rows, with a visible horizontal line between scenes or segments.
- **Capitalisation in the vision column.** Shot labels are capitalised in the vision column, screen directions/action are in lower case. Capitalised shot size or (or camera number for studio multi-cams) appear in the video column. Capitalised first mention of characters in vision column.
- **Audio column.** The audio column includes dialogue, music, and sound effects. Character/Talent names are bolded and in upper case. Speech is in lower case but voice-over (VO) is bolded (usually added in post-production). Music description/directions in lower case of the audio column between asterisks (like commas). Bold for audio file title, lower case plain for directions to fade, etc.
- **Capitalisation in the audio column.** Capitalised audio column directions ahead of dialogue, such as VO or piece to camera. Brackets and capitals for dialogue direction, such as (CONT'D) in the audio column.

Resource
Screenplay format exemplar and features

Resource
Three-column script format exemplar and features

Resource
Storyboard format exemplar and features

1   EXT. SUBURBAN STREET – NIGHT.

Two streetlamps cast a harsh yellow light over the quiet
suburban street. Long shadows from the white picket fences
stretch their pointed ends towards the houses. It's late, and
all the windows in the weatherboard cottages are dark except
for one. Through the glowing window, a solitary figure is
seated at a desk.

SLOW ZOOM IN on the window. Now closer, framed by red
curtains is a tired looking teacher, MRS COSIC (38). Still in
her slightly crumpled green work dress, her head is propped
up on one elbow as she glares at the assignment held in front
of her. Piles of books and papers partly obscure the open
window, and from a computer speaker the faint sound of Julie
London's 'Round Midnight' filters into the night.

                                                CUT TO:

2   INT. MRS COSIC'S STUDY – NIGHT.

The study is 'organised chaos' with books and half-finished
projects strewn about the room. Frustrated, Mrs Cosic slaps
the assignment down on the desk and sighs. A startled gecko
runs across the flyscreen.

                        MRS COSIC
                   (muttering to herself)
                What part of labelling your graphs
                is so hard!

She reaches for the COFFEE CUP, balanced precariously on a
pile of books. A DOG BARKS outside in the background,
followed by the DEEP RUMBLE of the V8 engine of an
approaching car. Mrs Cosic looks up mid-sip, squinting to see
through the window as the sound of the engine cuts out.

                                            CUT TO BLACK:

3   INT/EXT. CAR ON SUBURBAN STREET – NIGHT.

DARKNESS. TRUNK SHOT: The car boot opens with an audible
CLICK, revealing a tall, solid MAN in a suit and baker boy
cap, silhouetted by the streetlight behind him. He reaches
into the boot and carefully takes out a LARGE CASE.

                                                CUT TO:

4   INT. MRS COSIC'S STUDY – NIGHT.

Mrs Cosic flinches at the BANG of the car boot slamming shut.
Through the window, a suited man stands behind a metallic
blue '66 Mustang, parked under the streetlight. Mrs Cosic
gingerly places the cup on the desk between piles of papers.

                        MRS COSIC
                   (coaching herself)
                Ok, you can do this. Nice and
                gentle...easy does it...

Standing slowly, Mrs Cosic inconspicuously draws the curtains
closed, blocking off the view of the man as he inspects the
case held in front of him. Mrs Cosic's forehead creases in
concern as her eyes dart around the room - POV SHOTS: school
laptop bag, computer, music stand, paintbrushes, vase of red
geraniums, books, calculator, small SCISSORS.

She grabs the scissors and pockets them before smoothing the
skirt of her dress and tucking her shoulder-length hair
behind her ears. Mrs Cosic takes a deep breath and checks her
small gold watch. 11pm. The song 'Round Midnight' ends.

KNOCK KNOCK.

Stark, exaggerated shadows create a sense of unease for the audience and are a feature of German Expressionism and Film Noir. The shadows pointing towards the cottages, the light in the window and the slow zoom in draw attention to the main character.

The red colour of the curtains and window frame create a 'frame within a frame' effect to symbolise and foreshadow Mrs Cosic's trapped situation. Her tired appearance and the organised chaos of the home office setting combine to reinforce the exhausted teacher character.

The darkness followed by the 'inside out' or 'trunk shot' abruptly changes the tempo and perspective of the scene, and shows the Tarantino influence. Outlining the new character in silhouette increases the apprehension for the audience and keeps them engaged. The shape of the suit and hat, and the physical presence of the man indicates a possible threat.

Mrs Cosic's acting, specifically the worried expression and careful closing of the curtains further increases the tension of the scene. The threatening feeling of the previous shots is further heightened through the POV shots and when Mrs Cosic puts the scissors in her pocket.

Figure 14.20 This script excerpt for *Round Midnight* includes descriptions indicating the *film noir* and Tarantino-influenced style, as well as clarifying the symbolic codes such as the lighting, setting, costumes, props and acting. Key technical information such as significant camera directions and sound effects are also included in block capitals.

TIME	VISION	AUDIO
Sc 1. 00:00:00	FADE IN: **SH 1 – WS** Establishing shot of a suburban street at night- empty and still. Raised cottage style houses and white picket fences line the street. Two streetlamps produce a yellow glow, and the jagged shadows of the fences reach towards the houses. All the houses are dark expect for one window with the light still on in the front room. A figure is visible in the window.	*Sound FX: Ambient sounds of suburban nighttime - distant traffic, chirrup of a gecko, the odd bird call.*
00:00:08	**SH 2- EL LS** of the house with the light and slow **ZOOM IN** on the window. Red curtains frame a tired MRS COSIC (38) at her desk, head propped up on one elbow as she glares at an assignment. Piles of books and papers partly obscure the open window.	*Music: 'Round Midnight' by Julie London plays from inside the house- increase in volume as camera zooms closer. Add effects so the sound sounds diegetic as if from computer speakers.*
Sc 2. 00:00:12	**SH 3-** Slight **HA MLS** of INT of Mrs Cosic's study – **SLOW PAN** showing the 'organised chaos' with books and half-finished projects strewn about the room. **PAN** stops gently on Mrs Cosic seated at her desk next to the window, still wearing her green dress, slightly crumpled from the workday. Frustrated, Mrs Cosic slaps the paper down and reaches for her 'world's best teacher' coffee mug, perched on a pile of papers. A startled gecko runs across the flyscreen in the background.	*Music:(CONT'D) 'Round Midnight' – volume louder to reflect proximity to speakers.* **MRS COSIC:** What part of labelling your graphs is so hard?! *Sound FX: Ambient nights sounds are quieter, except for: O/S A dog barks in the distance. Sound of gecko chirp.*
00:00:23	**SH 4- EL MCU** of Mrs Cosic as she takes a sip of coffee. At the sound of the car, she pauses mid-sip and squints through the window to look outside, still holding the cup to her lips. CUT TO BLACK:	*Sound FX: O/S Deep rumble of the V8 engine of '66 Mustang. Sounds of engine turning off and car door opening.*
Sc 3. 00:00:26	**SH 5- DARKNESS. TRUNK SHOT, LA:** Light returns as the car boot opens, revealing a tall, solid MAN in a suit and baker boy cap - silhouetted by the streetlight behind him. The MAN reaches into the boot and carefully takes out a LARGE CASE. Camera is placed in the boot, looking up.	*Sound FX: Ambient night sounds slightly louder. Click of car boot opening and case being taken out.* *Music:(CONT'D) 'Round Midnight' song barely audible*
Sc 4. 00:00:32	**SH 6- EL MCU** side profile of Mrs Cosic looking outside, still holding her coffee. She flinches at the sound of the boot closing.	*Sound FX: O/S Bang of car boot closing.* *Music:(CONT'D) 'Round Midnight' volume as per Sc 2.*
00:00:35	**SH 7- EL MS** of Mrs Cosic seated in the foreground and the metallic blue '66 Mustang can be seen through the window in the background, parked under the streetlight. Carefully placing the coffee cup on the desk between piles of papers, Mrs Cosic slowly stands, trying to reassure herself. She surreptitiously draws the red curtains closed, blocking off the view of the car and the large, suited MAN standing behind it, inspecting the case in him arms.	**MRS COSIC:** Ok, you can do this. Nice and gentle…easy does it… nothing happening here.
00:00:45	**SH 8- EL MCU** of Mrs Cosic as she turns quickly to look around the room, forehead creased in worry.	*Music:(CONT'D) 'Round Midnight'. Increase volume gradually as the final verse plays.*
00:00:47	**SH 9- HA CU MONTAGE POV** shots - school laptop bag, computer, music stand, books, paintbrushes, vase of red geraniums, calculator, SCISSORS.	
00:00:51	**SH 10- EL CU** Mrs Cosic pauses for a split second, looking down at the scissors.	
00:00:53	**SH 11- HA CU** Mrs Cosic grabs the scissors from the desk.	
00:00:54	**SH 12- EL MLS** With her back to the window, Mrs Cosic puts the scissors in her dress pocket, smooths the skirt of her dress and tucks her shoulder-length hair behind her ears. Mrs Cosic takes a deep breath and checks her small gold watch.	
00:00:57	**SH 13- HA BCU POV** shot of watch face reading 11pm.	*Music: 'Round Midnight' song ends*
00:00:59 -00:01:02	**SH 14- EL MLS** Mrs Cosic looks up sharply at the sound of the knock, her eyes wide.	*Sound FX: O/S KNOCK KNOCK on front door*

Stark, exaggerated shadows in a German Expressionism/ Film Noir style create a sense of unease for the audience. The shadows pointing towards the cottages, the light in the window and the slow zoom in draw attention to the character.

The red colour of the curtains and window frame create a 'frame within a frame' effect to symbolise and foreshadow Mrs Cosic's trapped situation.

Her actions, appearance and chaotic home office setting combine to reinforce the exhausted teacher character.

The darkness followed by the 'inside out' or 'trunk shot' abruptly changes the tempo and perspective of the scene, and shows the Tarantino influence. The man's face is obscured by the shadows due to the silhouette which combined with the shot angle and physical presence creates a sense of mystery and possible threat.

Mrs Cosic's acting, specifically the worried expression and careful closing of the curtains further increases the tension of the scene.

The use of POV shots following the MCU of Mrs Cosic's expression serves to position the audience to identify with her and feel a sense of apprehension and foreboding.

Figure 14.21 In the three-column script excerpt for *Round Midnight*, each shot of the film is detailed in its own row of the table, along with the shot type, angle, any camera movement and the duration of each shot. The visual and character action descriptions are similar to the screenplay, and the audio column includes ambient noise, dialogue, music and sound effects.

15 Production and post-production for stylistic films

LIGHTING FOR STYLISTIC PRODUCTIONS

Photographs are time machines – a frozen moment captured from some time in the past. Originally, crystals of silver halide reacted chemically to photons of light; in the digital age, **complementary metal–oxide–semiconductor (CMOS)** chips produce numbers in a computer processor to record images. These optical machines have a preferred range of light to work in. The limited brightness range of early moving-picture photography drove the glass-roof studio designs in France. The large number of days with sunshine helped to establish Hollywood as a home for US movies.

Meeting the functional light range of a camera and lens combination is the first purpose of lighting. As sensitivity increased, experimenting on the extremes of that range helped artistry to develop. Lighting can set mood and also imply time and action off-screen. Much like framing, lighting can reveal *and* conceal – hiding objects within the frame and directing attention.

Mechanically, dark filters of **neutral density (ND)** restrict the brightness of the light entering the lens and, electronically, the **gain** (or **ISO** adjustment) boosts the image signal artificially.

'Painting with light' must be done with the camera in mind. There is a 'conversation' of **exposure** between light intensity and the seesaw of aperture and shutter speed. Gain, ND filters and the reflective quality of the objects to be filmed also need to be factored in. Lighting is not about the brightness the crew is standing in – it is a relationship with the recording and display devices.

The variable elements in lighting design are intensity, direction or quality, colour and source. Each element can be selected for artistic effect.
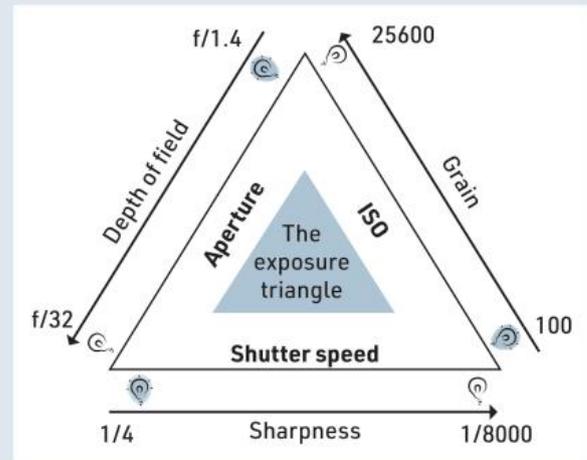
Figure 15.1 Artistry in exposure is the deliberate selection along the outer triangle: depth of field, graininess and the sharpness of motion. To access the full range of these options, the lighting must be bright enough. In the camera, **aperture** controls the amount of light passing through the lens, while the **shutter speed** determines how often the light is captured in the image area. Some of these functions are now digital simulations of the original inventions, such as the ISO (International Organisation for Standardisation) sensitivity which was a rating of film's chemical sensitivity to light.

Michael Borgers/Alamy Stock Photo

Studios

Studio-based television often looks inferior to film as the lighting is compromised for multi-camera coverage on a fixed grid. Most cinematic productions use the single camera method, which allows each shot to be tailored for an individual filming position. Lighting can also be arranged for the best solution for that particular camera angle.

Cameras do not respond to light like the human eye, so even an untidy garage can function as a studio by altering the lighting intensity and directional quality. Similar to exterior location filming, good risk management practice must be observed for safety.

Elements of lighting

Intensity

The dramatic difference between the images in Figure 15.2a and Figure 15.2b is due to **contrast ratio** – not the light intensity itself, but the ratio of the intensity between the brightest and darkest areas. When the ratio is low, there is little difference in exposure between the background and the subject. Therefore, everything is visible. When the ratio is high, the vast difference means a correct exposure for the subject drops the background detail to nothing, due to the limits of the camera. If the correct exposure for the dark background is selected, tools and bikes will be seen and the subject will be vastly overexposed.

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Figure 15.2 (a) Filming lights illuminate the walls, and the camera reveals full detail of the shed. Dark-coloured cloths are secured over the brightest areas of reflection. (b) Repositioning the light, using barn doors and reducing camera exposure to match the brightest object makes the background disappear. This is the same set with the same camera and lights; just different exposure and 'barn-dooring'.

High-key lighting

If the ratio of fill light to key light is close, the scene is considered **high-key** lighting. Each light contributes to a bright scene where details are very visible. Often used in comedies and musicals, it carries a happy connotation through soft lighting with low contrast, dominated by mid-tones. A physically higher lighting position is better able to hide shadows on the floor, perfectly suited to studio lighting grid set-ups with the camera at traditional eye-heights. High-key lighting brings with it less need for focus pulls and more need for makeup.

Low-key lighting

High-contrast ratios between lit areas produces a sombre mood and is known as **low-key** lighting. Areas of black dominate the frame in these subdued scenes of low light, made possible by grainy '**fast films**' or sensitive digital cameras. Historically, they were film stocks chosen for black-and-white news footage. Lower numbers of less powerful lights make the production more portable, with cameras able to use low angles and even include the ceiling. Use of physically lower lighting points means the shadows are visible in the frame.

Chiaroscuro

Having a high ratio between the fill and the key light means the mid-tones drop away, often disappearing altogether if a single key light is used. This produces **chiaroscuro** lighting (high contrast, low key), named after the Italian words for 'bright' and 'dark or obscured'. Chiaroscuro (pronounced with a 'k' sound) lighting lends itself to defined shadows that can become the subject of the shot rather than the character. Strong side-lighting produces depth, and without the fill it creates a **tone drop-out** effect that is an exaggeration of black-and-white film.

Light meters

Cinematographers may use light meters to measure the amount of light. **Incident light rays** and **reflected light rays** are measured to determine the intensity of incoming light and the reflected brightness of an object. Beyond a certain point, dark grey will become black to the camera.

Adjusting light intensity

With the lighting elements in place, the balance of object brightness will need to match the story-telling intention. To adjust light intensity, try the following:
- Choose a different-coloured object or a different wattage of light.

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Figure 15.3 Traditionally, light meters were analogue devices. Nowadays, light meter apps are available for smartphones to help judge the contribution of each light.

- Adjust the **flood-spot** setting or brightness faders where the light has these controls.
- Pass the light through **scrim** or **spun**, or even point the light away and use a **bounce-board** to reflect it back.
- Alter the **barn doors** to change the amount of light spilling forward.
- Move the light in relation to the subject.

The change of intensity is governed by a rule from physics that applies to radiation and sound: the inverse-square law. This rule states that light intensity is inversely proportional to the square of the distance from the light source. This is written as $I \propto \dfrac{1}{d^2}$.

The inverse-square law states that moving an object away from the light reduces intensity at a predictable rate. Going from a gap of 1 metre to a gap of 2 metres will produce one quarter of the intensity. That equates to half of a half, which fits very neatly with the f-stops, since each stop is half the light of the one before it.

If only one single light is being used, the camera needs to adjust two f-stops when the light is moved away twice as far. No matter which f-stop setting it starts on, doubling the distance needs a two-stop adjustment.

Therefore, adjusting the distance (with due respect for any hot lights) is an effective way to adjust intensity, particularly at close quarters.

Directional quality

Quality of light refers to the softness or single-point harshness. This can be grouped with direction of light. Having many harsh lights close together produces a softness as they fill in for each other, like the effect of lighting a stadium. Many **light-emitting diode (LED)** panels are a series of lights very close together. As a result, LED panels have a limited application. They produce soft light with low heat and power consumption, but most cannot concentrate the full intensity into a single beam.

Creative shadow manipulation is more suited to a single-point LED or a **tungsten** filament light, especially if a 'spot' adjustment can be used to produce sharp shadows. Relative distance from the light will also affect shadow sharpness, along with the size of the light-emitting surface.

Some strategies for adjusting intensity (such as scrim, spun, reflectors, barn doors and flood setting) also alter the quality of light because the apparent area of the light source is changed.

Munna Ansari/Alamy Stock Photo

| F/32 | F/22 | F/16 | F/11 | F/8 | F/5.6 | F/4 | F/2.8 | F/2 | F/1.4 |
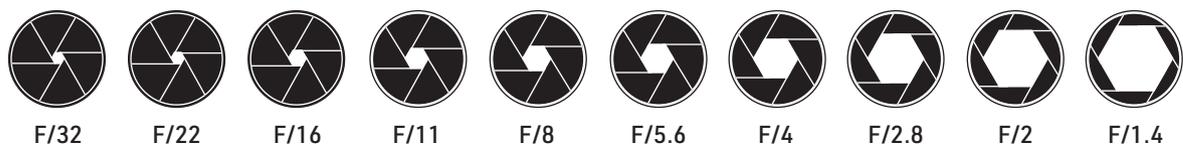
Figure 15.4 The inverse-square law is particularly useful for translating to cameras. Standard camera **f-stop** settings are shown above from the unusual f-32 to 1.4. Each f-stop allows twice the amount of light into the camera as the stop before it. The larger the number, the smaller the aperture, so the larger opening of f-11 will let in twice the light of f-16.
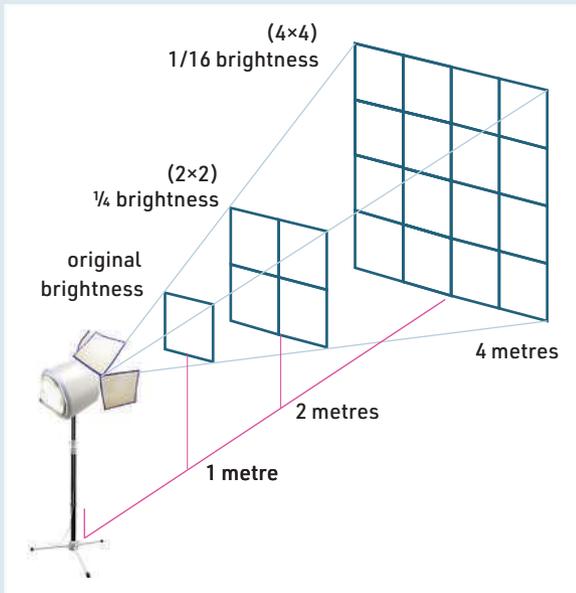
Figure 15.5 Double the distance to get ¼ of the light. According to the physics, light intensity is inversely proportional to the square of the distance. 2 × 2 = one over 4. At 2 metres from its source, the light intensity is one quarter of what it was at 1 metre from the source. 4 × 4 = 16, so at 4 metres from its source the light intensity is one sixteenth of the 1-metre intensity.

Three-point lighting is an effective starting point for direction of light (see *Nelson Film, Television & New Media, QCE Units 1 & 2*, page 367). A key, fill or backlight might be removed for mood. Consider some alternative lighting:

- **Ring lights**. Wrinkles on a model's face can be eliminated with a light that surrounds the lens. Lighting from the same angle as the camera fills in the texture, which looks flattering.
- **Catch lights**. Lights can be placed to create a sparkling highlight in the subject's eyes when taking close-ups. Catch lights are often evident in pupil reflections.
- **Ceiling bounce**. One powerful light can soften all of the shadows with a gentle fill from the overhead reflection on a white ceiling.
- **Hair light**. A backlight trained specifically on one character's position will define them and increase background separation. This can be from a low placement, or sometimes as a top light, relying on shine.
- **Rim light**. A backlight above and behind the subject illuminates the majority of the figure or object for visual separation of backgrounds and objects.

Colour

Emotion, time and location aspects are communicated through colour. Measured on the Kelvin scale, the colour temperature of location lights depends on the chemical element involved. Streetlights can use a variety of materials to produce light of different colour temperatures: sodium vapour (yellow), mercury (green), xenon (blue), halogen (white) and fluorescents (purple or greenish).

Lights for filming must have a consistent colour across scenes. The two standard settings are tungsten and daylight. Many types of bulbs are available in 'daylight', which is a bluish colour of 5600 K. Tungsten lamps are quite orange, around 3200 K, which corresponds to the indoor setting on cameras for the warmer orange light. LED lights can select these options.

Cameras can be programmed to recognise white according to the lighting condition they are in. The automatic function of white balance is normally very effective in responding to the light colour. Situations that mix different colours of light can create a problem. The camera may make a compromise or have to adjust from shot to shot unless there is a manual control.

Exteriors in shaded areas tend to look bluer from the reflected skylight. Under large trees, the yellower light direct from the sun is screened out, while the blue bounces in from the surrounding sky. Colour temperature also varies with the amount of cloud cover, time of day and latitude.

A solution for mixed colours when filming indoors is to exclude all daylight by drawing curtains.

Federico Moreno/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 15.6 The physics of light determines its behaviour. Blue light is more easily refracted, giving it more punch than other colours to bounce off backlit stage smoke. Conversely, warmer light tends to travel straighter, which is why yellow is the best colour for fog lamps and streetlights in misty areas. The longer wavelength of red light is not as easily bent, but the shorter wavelength of blue light is more easily scattered as it passes through the smoke.

Blue filters can be pegged over tungsten lights to match the outside light, and LEDs can be dialled to the blue setting. The decision to turn on domestic lighting may add little useful light. It may depend on the colour temperature of the lamps matching the desired look for the scene.

Post-production allows for subtle white balance adjustments and outlandish colour tints to be added. However, the effect of this is different from adjusting lights on location. Exaggerated colours can be applied to individual lights using professional heat-proof **gels** of strong colour pegged to barn doors. The non-realistic colours are known as 'party gels'.

Colour reflection from green-screen studio walls can ruin the digital effect by discolouring whites and reflective surfaces, spoiling the sharp edge of the masking. **Magenta** gels can be used, sometimes called a **negative green**, to counter the unwanted reflected green colour.

Lighting sources

Variable light sources (such as the sun on a partially cloudy day, moving shadows from wind in trees or shifting patches of light as the sun moves) can disrupt the consistency of takes. Changes in light can be disguised by using a scrim over the subjects. **Sail cloths**, **silks** and **grifflons** are large-format lighting **diffusers** for exteriors.

Additive lighting

Directing a light source into darker areas is referred to as **additive lighting**. This is the conventional way to draw out details with light. Lamps that contribute light from within the frame are referred to as 'practicals', but they are often not bright enough to make a useful contribution. Additional lights may be carefully aimed to boost the output of a practical. Fireplaces are also relatively dim, and reverse shots of fireside faces often need to be creatively boosted.

Subtractive lighting

When the source light is too uniform, **flags** or **cutters** can be used to cast shadows. This is called

Figure 15.7 Technically, the Bat Signal from the superhero franchise is a **gobo** (not a cookie board). A gobo is placed on the light and is intended to create a more precise shape. At the same time, a **snoot** wraps around the whole beam to contain the outer edge.

Imago/Alamy Stock Photo

subtractive lighting. Sometimes, taking light away may be desirable. If a black cutter is used near a face, it creates a 'negative bounce' – absorbing light from one side to bring direction to a diffuse light source. This increases modelling and texture.

Selective blocking of light

Light can also be selectively removed from directional sources to help them blend with the set. **Cookie boards (cucoloris)** create patterned shadows from stencils mounted on clamps such as a **C-stand**. *Film noir* is well known for the symbolic use of venetian blind shadows that are easily simulated through lighting design, even without a window.

Day for night

Imitating night can also be enhanced with selective blocking. The technique is used to allow cameras to work in a preferred light level, but it can look very artificial. Exposure can always be darkened in post-production and have extra blue added, as long as there is an adequate image to work with. Images should not be severely underexposed at the shooting stage.

Some filmmakers advise only shooting on overcast days as overhead sunlight is difficult to

'Many game designers vary light contrast and colors to direct the participant's attention to important artifacts. Such lighting effects may indirectly affect participants' choices and actions.'

Magy Seif El-Nasr and Ian Horswill, in their paper on Expressive Lighting Engines for games

disguise. Editing the colour balance and contrast can help. Doubling up on daylight gels and party gels on the actual film lights is very effective for close shots.

Lighting style

Expressive lighting

Hyperbole can be used in lighting. Many chase scenes and showdowns take place under flashing lights, cascading sparks and rotating spotlights. These industrial grunge sets are also expressive, exaggerating the mood of the action.

Expressiveness is also achieved through the overly minimal lighting of the *film noir* chiaroscuro. Quirky and abstract lighting can work like a German Expressionist set, drawing attention to its own exaggerated form.

Expressive lighting can also be very realistic and still have an aesthetic purpose. A character turning off a practical lamp at a moment of defeat accentuates the dramatic aspects. This is a meaning beyond the task of producing illumination.

Naturalistic lighting

Sensitive cameras have allowed the amount of light needed on set to fall over the decades. Natural light can often be the primary source, making it very difficult for viewers to see that lighting has been added to the scene. Many filmmakers and advertisers are very interested in manufacturing a look of authenticity, and naturalistic lighting reinforces this.

Less studio-looking studio lighting can be generated by allowing actors to walk through holes in the lighting, passing through shadows as they move. Using light sources that are justified from within the frame by windows or practicals adds realism.

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Figure 15.8 An actual piece of tree foliage used to cast a shadow is known as a **dingle**. Its pattern can hide microphone shadows or provide high-contrast, dappled light for simulated night shots with blue gels. C-stands (C for Century) can lock the branches in place for a studio lighting illusion.

15.1 ACTIVITIES

1. **Analyse** the use of lighting production technologies in a series of three still ads. Present the three ads in a way that allows you to map the light sources in their position outside the frame. Mark any light sources within the frame and indicate the characteristics of each light according to the four elements of lighting: intensity, direction, colour, source. Where possible, list the lighting technologies used.
2. **Experiment** with the three-point lighting convention. Refer to *Nelson Film, Television & New Media, QCE Units 1 & 2*, page 368 for three-point lighting information and a diagram guide. Lock the camera in position and record a few sentences with three individual lights on. Film another take with one light off, trying out the combinations two lights at a time. Edit the footage in a series of jump cuts that displays the full variety of combinations of the three lights.
3. **Create** a moving-image media shot in *film noir* style.
   - **Design** a cookie board from assembled objects at even spaces, or cut strips in card to simulate a venetian blind cookie board.
   - Re-create the *film noir* **convention** of an actor arriving at an office desk.
   - Place the camera to disguise the lack of a genuine window and record some action under the venetian blind shadows.
   - Add some lines of voice-over and appropriate music for a 1940s detective genre.
4. **Experiment** with single point lighting to reverse-engineer the images in Figure 15.9. Replicate the thumbnail images. Record the images you reproduce, including 'behind the scenes' shots at full exposure to reveal each safe technical set-up. Try interior car lighting without a car and a candle-light dinner without a candle.
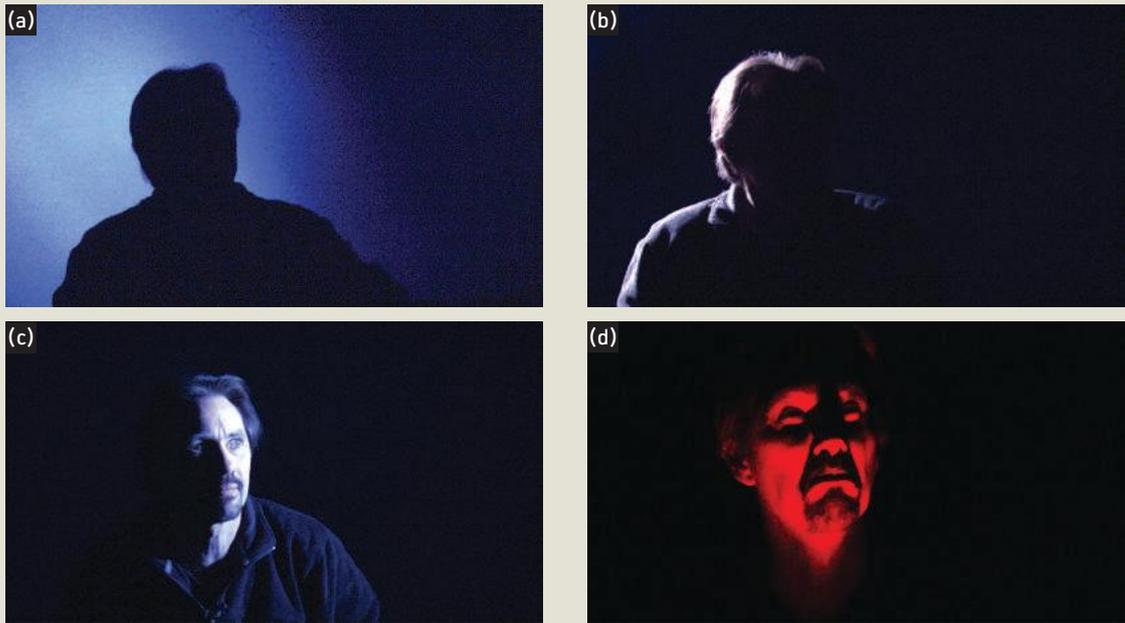
D. Sinclair

Figure 15.9 A single, controlled filming light with a dark background can produce dramatically different results. A narrow 'barn-dooring' of the light beam reveals a variation in the subject by changing the position of the one light.

SHOOTING TECHNIQUES FOR STYLISTIC PRODUCTIONS

Excluding selected parts of the 'real world' is a critical planning step, particularly for location shooting. For stylistic productions, the *mise en scène* must reveal and conceal according to the era, mood and logic underpinning the story world (see Chapter 5). This key determinant may limit where the camera can be pointed.

Composition and framing

Placement within the frame and the power of the visual interest will manipulate your audience. Technology used by the advertising industry reveals why classical composition has been effective

David Caton/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 15.10 Eye-movement tracking of Vincent van Gogh's *Starry Night* (1889) indicates that viewers look to the brightest star and begin to think about stars as a concept, according to Gufran Ahmed, data scientist and researcher at Jazan University. We then preferentially look to the left of the composition to find a connecting idea (other stars) and begin reading that idea along leading lines.

Maxbrux/Shutterstock.com

Figure 15.11 Faces are magnets for attention. Eye-tracking analysis of *The Last Supper* by Leonardo da Vinci shows viewer focus is first drawn to the central figure of Jesus. The ultra-wide composition of the artwork then sends the attention in either direction along the row of grouped human faces. Similarly, in advertising, key product information can be placed in such areas when composing ads.

in directing attention. We look to the areas of interest with a western world's left-to-right tendency. 'Reading' of images happens so fast it is considered involuntary.

Compositional strategies

Visual artists refer to the elements and principles of design to analyse a still image (see *Nelson Film, Television & New Media, QCE Units 1 & 2*, Chapter 6). Many of those elements and principles apply to moving images. Some relevant aspects can be grouped together as a set of filming strategies for interesting composition.

Intersections

- **Converging lines.** A focal point can draw the eye initially, sparking the first pass of the image and then a second or third circuit in which greater detail is absorbed. In Figure 15.11, the perspective lines reinforce the centrality of Jesus in Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper* (c. 1490s).

- **Diagonals.** A straight line becomes a diagonal through perspective and camera placement or by tilting the camera for a Dutch angle (see *Nelson Film, Television and New Media, QCE Units 1 & 2*, page 55). Any oblique angle will tend to add energy and dynamism. Verticals tend to look elegant and horizontals restful.

- **Rule of thirds.** The well-known compositional technique produces a pleasing result as it almost automatically creates emphasis and balance. It can infer a diagonal relationship between objects on intersections of opposite thirds, even if one is not visible (see *Nelson Film, Television & New Media, QCE Units 1 & 2*, page 59). When using the rule of thirds, it must be adjusted to suit the aspect ratio of the medium – however, this is a rule that can be broken.

Relationship

- **Balance.** The suggestion of an even frame does not only come from obvious symmetry. One small object can create an equal match for an

2929 Productions/Photo 12/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 15.12 A strong middle horizon line can bisect a shot, creating two distinct zones battling for dominance. If a visual bridge is provided by an object or a movement, it can bring cohesion. A diagonal and asymmetrical balance are also used against the flat terrain in *The World's Fastest Indian* (2006).

apparently larger object through strength of colour and the illusion of mass or density. This can be further complicated by the suggestion of distance and knowledge of the object.

- **Asymmetry.** Tension or anxiety in the audience may be heightened by using an unbalanced asymmetrical composition. A balanced asymmetry will be less disturbing, but still adds energy to traditional balance.
- **Negative space.** Empty spaces 'want' to be filled. This can increase anticipation, or even isolation and disappointment in longer takes. These 'holes' between objects can provide looking space for an eyeline, movement space for characters and objects, or an invitation for another character to appear. They can also provide opportunity for audiences to project a conceptual idea such as thinking space, or an escape from the physical scene the character is placed in.
- **Frame within a frame.** Depending entirely on the relative placement of the camera, this technique requires an imaginative eye to take advantage of the possibilities. Filmmakers must not settle for the first view that they have of the location. A walk through the whole 360 degrees of the 'set' gives an opportunity to recognise what the location provides. High and low vantage points should be explored before determining what to add to the scene.

Distance

- **Claustrophobic frames.** Lack of space between characters and the frame hides information from the audience. Suspense is built by the viewer's desperation to see what threatens the character. Audiences are forced to 'look around the next corner' only at the rate permitted by the filmmaker. Digital games can achieve the effect via placement of walls, portals and other objects. First-person play can also be unnerving if the field of view does not provide adequate warning of hazards. In a romance scene, this close framing may provide intimacy; however, if an extremely restricting frame lingers, it can become a threat.
- **Perspective.** Wider angle lenses and straight lines emphasise perspective difference between the foreground and the distance. Placing the camera close to a wall surface or an object can achieve a similar result, exaggerating the size difference.
- **Low angle.** Placing the camera low is the classic way to convey a powerful subject. It can also increase the feeling of distance by capitalising on the perspective distortion of a floor, or to allow an open sky to dominate the frame.

Camera movement and motivation

- **Leading lines.** Like arrows on a sign, the eye is drawn to follow a branch, a horizon line or a road. Audience attention is directed along these
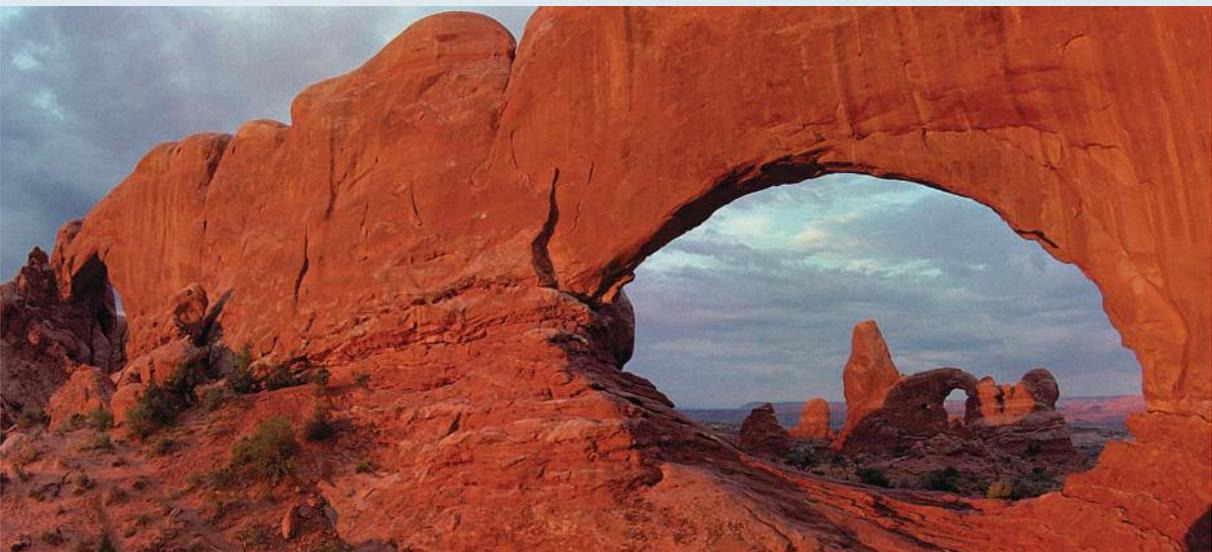
Arena Pal/Collection Christophel

Figure 15.13 Others have filmed this hole in Utah – yet, in *Baraka* (1992), even the time of day adds to the compositional elements. This shot makes use of diagonal, rule of thirds, asymmetrical balance, depth, complementary colours, mass and frame within a frame, within a frame, within the frame.

lines. Wide screen aspect ratios allow the viewers to navigate their own way to the point of interest at the end of the linear element.

- **Motivated move.** Cameras can travel along linear elements for the audience. The frame can also follow an object or character. When these things prompt the camera to follow, it can be considered a **motivated move**. Directional elements can provide the reason for initiating a pan, tilt or crane. Audience attention is again following the lines, but in a controlled reveal by the camera. These motivated movements tend to work the same way that a viewer naturally wants to follow a character that moves, or the desire to follow an eyeline that strays off-screen.
- **Three-dimensionality.** Layering objects in the foreground, midground and background ensures a perception of depth. Distance is emphasised by differing shades of colour in the layers and by manipulating focus. Dolly and tracking shots can be accentuated by dressing the set with objects at varying distances. They pass the lens at different speeds, drawing attention to the motion of the camera. A series of objects or perforations allow for a continual sense of movement more than large, solid objects obscuring the background.

Compositional strategies work together

Each of the compositional strategies can guide the formation of an artistic frame – more as ingredients than absolute rules. Unlike painting and photography, which are trapped by time, the moving-image media are freed from being frozen. They are able to move in and out of these compositional recipes as the shot progresses.

A game or virtual reality environment may be designed to provide a certain vista through an opening as an invitation to the next challenge, or perhaps the player may happen to align with the virtual objects through chance.

Television, film and animation have an aesthetic advantage: the audience is forced to endure the duration of the shot. Each one of these artistic features can occur at the start, middle or end of a moving frame. The linear narrative filmmaker knows that even if a shot is ugly, it can be saved by ending on an inspired composition through moving the characters, objects or the camera. A shot can be awkward and even improvised mid-take if it is bracketed by beauty at each end.

Camera movement equipment

Skateboards and wheelie-bins have often been employed at great risk to the equipment and the filmmaker in pursuit of a moving shot. Safe methods for moving camera shots include **tri-dolly** (clip-on tripod castors), **pipe dollies** constructed from angled skateboard trucks, **Steadicams** (to increase stability through camera inertia) and full-scale film dollies that can carry a camera operator and focus puller. Even a tabletop in a restaurant can provide a crude dolly track if a camera **slider** is not available. A **sink dolly** can be executed with a towel under the camera to reduce friction when moving it on a kitchen bench.

In-built image stabilisation on cameras and phones reduces the need for equipment. Digital stabilising can sacrifice quality and produce noticeable frame lag. 'Warp stabilisers' within editing tools iron out bumps, as does slow motion. Deliberate frame drift can be a stylistic decision that often conveys realism or 'being in the moment'.

In *Au pays des mages noirs* (*In the Land of the Black Magi*, 1947), Jean Rouch's wandering frame captures the frenzied villagers looking possessed. The handheld effect became a matter of philosophical choice for Rouch, and influenced the French New Wave (see Chapters 11 and 12).

Hand-held filming was a stylistic choice for South African/Canadian director, Neill Blomkamp in *District 9* (2009). He says he was not focused on creating a social metaphor, just communicating the reality of life under the racially segregated apartheid

Weblink
Sink dolly
What is a sink dolly?

AJ Pics/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 15.14 The choreographing of the long take near the climax of *Children of Men* (2006) is highly regarded as a crucial part of its successful handheld style. Immersion in the 2027 fictional film world increases empathy for the new African mother who represents the only hope for the future of humanity.

Album/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 15.15 Using 1960s TV cameras, *Jackie* (2016) re-creates the famous 1962 broadcast by the US first lady, titled, 'A Tour of the White House by Mrs John F Kennedy'.

D. Sinclair

Figure 15.16 Many accessories are available to stabilise filming on a whole range of domestic and professional equipment. Avoiding tripods may create the illusion of less work through faster set-ups. However, this time will often be more than consumed in the complexity of camera moves or finding edit points.

system he was familiar with. Blomkamp says growing up in Johannesburg in that era dominates his mind quite a lot of the time. In *Children of Men* (2006), Mexican director Alfonso Cuarón makes the societal collapse into a personal reality through the handheld filming style.

The handheld camera is one of the moving techniques used in *Jackie* (2016) to transport

the audience to 1963, the time of US President Kennedy's assassination. Director Pablo Larraine integrates his new filming with an intimate documentary style, also casting fellow director Greta Gerwig as the White House social secretary.

Vertical movement can be achieved with **jib arms**, cable suspended rigs, cherry pickers, helicopters and drones. A small, handheld crane-up with the human body can be as spectacular as a large movement, if the foreground is thoughtfully dressed to amplify the movement.

'I had lost my tripod early on in some rapids and didn't know how to shoot …'

Jean Rouch, the pioneering French filmmaker describing how he shot his documentary in Africa, where he developed the handheld style

ArenaPal/Performing Arts Images

ArenaPal/Performing Arts Images

Figure 15.17 (a) *Citizen Kane* (1941), directed by Orson Welles. The sign was constructed to come apart during a crane shot, creating a gap for the large camera after the lens had passed through the letters. (b) Smaller cameras, phones and drones increase moving shot possibilities. GoPros are frequently mounted on the microphone boom pole by news crews seeking a second camera angle.

Moviestore Collection Ltd/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 15.18 *Poseidon* (2006) tested available graphics with the complexity of water. The opening sequence reveals the context of production, utilising emerging computer capabilities for realism – quite different to the fantasy and science fiction graphics of the era. The sequence is known for joining individual moving shots of a ship that did not actually exist. Compositors took a week to process the 4000 frames of fluid dynamics and a completely digital ship.

Joining camera moves

'Morphing' is a computer-assisted method for joining two shots by gradually altering the shape of objects. The technique can also be used to connect individual shots as one. Directors who desired extremely long takes were once limited by the length of film that could be loaded into a camera. The 'invisible cut' was a solution. Actor movements could be contrived to enter a pitch-black lift or block the camera by walking to the lens with a dark jacket. The moment of black could be used to reload the film and produce a seamless cut. *Birdman* (2014) uses this technique as well as zip pans and digital object wipes to create continuous shots.

Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) gives the impression of a much longer take between two complicated moving camera set-ups in different rooms. As the camera leaves the famous shower scene to focus our attention on the newspaper, a cut is hidden in the black-and-white tone of the wall. Another example can be found in Hitchcock's *Rope* (1948), which appears as a continuous take.

Weblink
Poseidon (2006): opening titles

15.2 ACTIVITIES

1 **Compositional strategies**. Respond to the areas of activity in the following table.

CREATE	EXPERIMENT	ANALYSE
Create a systematic collection of examples for each of the compositional strategies listed in this section using a still camera or locked-off tripod on an in-house excursion. **Arrange** the visual elements according to the described conventions as the priority for each of the strategies.	**Experiment** in groups of two or three with three compositions around your current context. Record a wider shot of a leading line within a static frame. Referring to eye-tracking research, discover where your audience is most likely to look within your three frames and mark on your images the likely points of interaction with audience attention. **Experiment** with the leading lines by using them as a cue for the alternative technique of directing attention in a closer moving-image 'motivated move' (e.g. pan, tilt or dolly). **Experiment** with an end point on the leading line that fulfils the brief of a natural end to the move, and place a product within view near that end point.	**Analyse** the constituent parts in the composition strategy of an image designed for the purpose of promoting a product, service or opinion. **Examine** the directing of audience attention and indicate the elements through a combination of explanatory text and markings on the image. **Analyse** technical and symbolic codes evident and consider how they support the compositional strategy in the explanatory text. **Analyse** the success of the sum of these techniques in capturing the attention of a particular audience.

2 **Three dimensions and movement**. Respond to the areas of activity in the following table.

EXPERIMENT	EXPERIMENT	EXPERIMENT
Experiment with two takes of a tabletop tracking shot using objects from your current context. Use the friction-reduction method of a camera on a jumper, carefully slid sideways to observe the apparent movement. Repeat the shot with props placed at *various* distances to discover what most accentuates movement of the benchtop **sink dolly**.	**Experiment** with various stabiliser techniques in a small group. Turn off the stabilising in your camera device and walk quickly but smoothly along a corridor. Try out the camera stabiliser by repeating the exact same motion. **Experiment** with a post-production warp stabiliser effect applied to both takes to discover which of the four methods gives the desired result.	**Experiment** in a group of three with a handheld crane from a personal possession on a tabletop to discover the identity of the owner at the end of a timed 5-second take. **Experiment** with a slow motion applied at 80 per cent. Calculate and film a take length to maintain 5 seconds of rendered footage. **Experiment** to determine at what percentage of speed reduction the individual strobe of frames is a problem. Calculate the real-time filming needed for a 5-second shot at the slowest acceptable speed.

EDITING FOR STYLISTIC PRODUCTIONS

Montage editing

Musicians do not improvise guitar solos by striking a series of random notes at totally unpredictable times. Knowledge of the musical key and reference to timing is needed, even if broken up by the odd sliding note and some syncopated beats. Patterns must also be recognised in montage editing – choosing to repeat a blurred movement several times in a row or cutting in the middle of one movement to another.

Soundtracks can often provide motivation for a montage in stylistic and narrative production, illustrating a character's physical or emotional journey. Cutting to the beat of a song is a good option but it should not be overplayed. Just like sentence lengths in a paragraph, some variation is desirable. Colour may be used as a linking device to cue a cut between shots of the same colour, and movements provide natural points of exit. It can feel awkward if a motion is partially completed on a cut, unless that motion is continued into the next shot.

Generally, there should be a sense of completion for a shot or a series of linked shots. Montage editing is the art of making a series of jump cuts 'feel' cohesive. Over time, it is possible to develop an innate sense of an editor's rhythm.

Weblink
The King's Speech (2010): mentor scene

Collision of images

Placing two shots together suggests a third meaning from their combination. Suggesting those two shots are occurring in real time gives the seamless cohesion of Hollywood-style continuity editing (see *Nelson Film, Television & New Media, QCE Unit 1 & 2*, Chapter 17). This requires extra attention to particular details.

Eyeline angles to the camera in most conversations should be relatively similar. If one subject is looking only 10 degrees off the **barrel of the camera**, the other end should mirror that angle. It should suggest the viewer is turning their head on the spot, as if observing each speaker from a similar camera position. A 90-degree profile needs to be roughly reciprocated in the reverse shot.

The King's Speech (2010) features reverse angles that share a reciprocated angle yet have an usual lack of looking space. This skews the negative space away from the two lead characters. The shots are connected in the one space, but with a sense of isolation from the world and intensity between the characters.

Tripods should not be set up for the comfort of the camera operator. Camera height should be governed by the angle on characters and the background elements to include or exclude from the frame. In a conversation, the taller character should be filmed from slightly below their eye height, even if the shot is not a point of view. The reverse for the opposite character.

Differentiating or connecting locations can be supported by colour correction. **White balance** can be adjusted or a tint can be added to help the audience recognise (even subconsciously) the slight change in the atmospherics of the venue. Background sounds and **atmosphere tracks** will allow the audio to support this, adding a convincing polish to the collision of images.

Associative editing

Direct visual comparison via graphic matches and so on is not required if the audience's general knowledge can do the same work. Cutting from highly visible cigarette smoke to a bushfire creates a visual link that does not need to have a cause and effect via narrative – it can be just a connective device to improve visual fluidity.

Like the telling of a joke, the priming of an audience to receive the mental association between shots must be carefully planned in the set-up so the 'punchline' falls efficiently. The Silverchair music video for *The Greatest View* (2002) has a strong stylistic element throughout, and a shot near the end of a seatbelt fastening as the building shakes. The association of preparing for take-off is strong enough to justify the outrageous conclusion of the building blasting off like a rocket.

Dialogue or other audio can play a major role in generating associations. One example from a UK television crime production makes use of it in narrative to increase shock value. A discussion occurs between a detective and a forensic officer over a body just pulled from the river. 'Well, I suppose we will know more after the autopsy', the detective says as a close-up on the face shows a body bag zipping up. The abrupt shot change to the next scene is accompanied by a loud screeching noise of a saw blade, in what is sometimes called a **smash cut**. The technique is meant to jar the audience with a dramatic change, without the audio forewarning of a J-cut. In this case, the unrelated character of the butcher is then revealed in a mid-shot, wrapping up meat in a delicatessen for the detective's dinner.

Experimenting with stylistics in technologies and representations

If valuable things are discovered by chance, it is referred to as serendipity. These happy accidents can occur in the production process, and the observant filmmaker is able to respond creatively.

Using mistakes

Out-takes should not be deleted. Unused takes can be reviewed for dream sequences, flashbacks or fight scenes. Accidental, frenetic movement that is out of focus can often provide effective quick-cut montage material or a transparent overlay in slow-motion to depict reminiscing.

Collaboration is valuable for recognising unintended potential in footage. Often, the camera operator will only see their error, rather than a constructive use. Directors or writers can be

Weblink
Silverchair – *The Greatest View*
(2002)

© Darren Sinclair

Figure 15.19 The Old Museum building in Brisbane has an architectural similarity to rockets on a launch pad. Connecting the 'rockets' on the building to actual rockets could be done using associative editing. A shot of a countdown check being conducted could be connected with camera shake on the building and rocket blasting sounds to suggest the whole building is lifting off.

(Left and right) ArenaPal/Performing Arts Images

Figure 15.20 Exact graphic matches are not needed for viewers to understand that train passengers are sorted and processed in a similar way to chickens. In cinema screenings of this scene, it seems most audience empathy rests with the chickens over the people. This is one of many associative editing examples from *Baraka* (1992).

so attached to a scene, based on the time already invested, they are not prepared to scrap it. This is a good argument for having an editor as a fresh eye – someone not emotionally attached to the effort on set.

The process of deletion is also experimentation. It could be switching off a dialogue soundtrack or removing an entire scene that does not progress the narrative. Professionally, scriptwriters work on set with emergent changes to dialogue. Test audiences have been used to rate different versions of a film, sometimes deleting a planned resolution.

Plan to experiment

Standard practice should be to record a series of cutaway (and cut-in) footage from the scene that does not rely on continuity to allow flexibility in editing. Film extra establishing shots and interesting angles. Before a set-up is broken down, at least a sample of footage should be played back to check the quality of recording video and audio. Some problems are not apparent during recording, such as mobile phone interference with the audio recording.

Especially for expressive pieces, deliberate over exposure, recording 'on air' zip-zooms, hunting and re-framing, and focus pulls can all provide rich pickings for an editor prepared to find patterns and connections in such takes. Space on a memory card is cheap compared with the investment of time: maximise the visual resources from which to mine in post-production.

Do not let the technology take charge. Automatic functions have their place in certain situations – however, the creator of the image should be in charge of the equipment, not the other way around. Take manual control of focus points and exposure to direct audience attention and emotions.

Bloomberg/Getty Images

Figure 15.21 *Olive* (2013) was filmed on a deconstructed 1940s film camera attached to a phone, visible right at the back of the lens structure. 'Home-made' camera experiments continue with *28 Years Later* (2025). While there have been other zombie apocalypse films before this sequel, new experiments with technology include a modified iPhone 15 Pro Max. External lenses and monitors were some additions made for the experimental filming hardware.

'The camera thinks it knows what you want to focus on. But it doesn't know.'

Hooman Khalili, director of *Olive*

15.3 ACTIVITIES

1 **Create** a series of still frames using compositional strategies. Select one technique from each of the four compositional strategy headings. Record your four composed shots.

2 **Experiment** with the technology of various stabiliser techniques for a moving camera. Record a tracking shot of a character moving along a corridor using a handheld camera. Re-record the same shot using a gimble, Steadicam (if one is available) or simply attach a folded-up tripod to the handheld camera to add inertia. Re-record the shot again using a wheeled device, such as a pipe dolly, tri-dolly wheels or a very carefully managed trolley (skateboards have proved a safety hazard). Compare the results and add slow-motion at various rates in post-production.

3 **Experiment** with the representation of a location by adding props. Re-create a sink dolly on a desk using towelling or jumper material. Record a dolly shot with a character in the background. Re-record the sink dolly with a series of props in the foreground on the desk to accentuate the movement. **Analyse** how the representation of the character is altered by the choice of props in the sink dolly scene.

4 **Analyse** the joined shot sizes in the title sequence of *Poseidon* (2006). List the shot sizes at certain points and the traditional camera movements that morph together to form the 2-minute above-water title shot for the movie.

5 **Design** two consecutive shots for associative editing use. Arrange two storyboard frames according to subject matter that creates an association. The proposed edit should contain a similarity of concept in the subject matter rather than a direct compositional link in the visuals.

16 Statement of intent

WRITING THE STATEMENT OF INTENT

Every moving-image media product made provides a rich opportunity for reflection and growth as an artist. By evaluating and reflecting on their own work, a moving-image media artist is able to further develop their technical proficiency, consolidate their style, increase their innovation and creativity, and therefore improve their overall artistry.

Artistic intention

All moving-image media artists have an intention. This drives the choices made during the creation of their artworks and their continual reflection surrounding the effectiveness of choices. This intention may be stylistic, a response to context or process-based; that is, where the process of creation is considered more important than the final outcome.

As a moving-image media artist, you will need to reflect on your own intentions in creating your product. Why did you make these choices? How did you judge whether a shot or a sound effect was effective? What was your overall intention and how did you fulfil this?

The stylistic intention behind Baz Luhrmann films

The intention of Australian filmmaker Baz Luhrmann (1962–) in making films is to create stories about love. He communicates these stories through a highly stylised cinematic form he calls the 'Red Curtain'. This style was established in the creation of his first film, *Strictly Ballroom* (1992) and aesthetically connected *Romeo + Juliet* (1996) and *Moulin Rouge!* (2001).

Luhrmann has spoken very clearly about his stylistic intention with the 'Red Curtain': to use a highly stylised cinematic language that forces

Ronald Grant/M &/AFFC/BEYOND FILMS M & A/AFFC/BEYOND FILMS/Alamy Stock Photo

Figure 16.1 Ballroom dancers Vanessa Cronin (Leonie Page), Liz Holt (Gia Carides) and Tina Sparkle (Sonia Kruger) in their competition finery. All choices in Baz Luhrmann's film *Strictly Ballroom* are driven by his artistic intent. He calls this the 'Red Curtain' style, and one aspect of this style is the use of a device to heighten reality. In *Strictly Ballroom*, this device is ballroom dance. The exaggerated and colourful world of competitive ballroom dance is present in every frame of Luhrmann's film, realising his artistic intent.

the audience to participate actively in the viewing experience, through challenging any constructs that relate to realism. Luhrmann says he intends for the audience to be always aware that they are watching a movie. As a result, he does not prioritise plot: Luhrmann tells 'predictable' stories, focusing instead on *how* a story is told. 'One of the primary ways of telling this kind of story is that the audience must know from the beginning how it is going to end, so that within the first 10 minutes you know how it's going to end.'

Consequently, Luhrmann says he draws on techniques from a variety of internal, contextual and artistic influences that help to ensure his moving-image media products align with this stylistic intent. He says he deliberately embeds elements of song, dance and theatricality, drawn from Bollywood cinema, Hollywood musicals, Italian opera, music videos and his childhood memories of his mother's ballroom dance experiences, into the narratives of all

his films. Each film uses a 'device' to unfold a no-surprises narrative. For example:

- *Strictly Ballroom* (1992) uses a narrative about ballroom dance to heighten a familiar 'ugly duckling' story.
- *Romeo + Juliet* (1996) is edited, shot and scored like an MTV music video, and interspersed with moments reminiscent of Mozart's comic operas. Its fast, futuristic world ensures that the audience remains engaged through every familiar line of Shakespeare's text.
- *Moulin Rouge!* (2001), a pop-pastiche musical, explodes with Bollywood-influenced colour, song and dance that comedically energises a tragic star-crossed lovers tale.

In his deliberate and purposeful selection of languages, representations and technologies, Luhrmann ensures that his stylistic intention of heightened cinema language is realised, and his audience are therefore actively engaged through his films.

Figure 16.2 Baz Luhrmann has since evolved and expanded his style beyond the 'Red Curtain' trilogy. Throughout *Elvis* (2022), Luhrmann and his collaborator, production designer Catherine Martin, used blue as a primary colour to underscore the psychological decline of protagonist Elvis Presley. *Elvis* was filmed in studios on the Gold Coast, Queensland. The production employed significant numbers of FTVNM alumni.

What is a statement of intent?

A statement of intent is an opportunity for a student filmmaker to clarify their creative vision and rationale for their production. Students can explore their artistic intentions and influences, and make judgements about how they developed personalised practices. When reflecting on intent, it is important to consider how, and to what extent,

artists and stylistic conventions of influence shaped your approach to chosen styles and your approach to production and post-production practices.

This statement may be created throughout the filmmaking process. Some components can be written during pre-production, and others throughout the production and post-production process. The key to an insightful statement of intent is to **evaluate**, which means weighing up how significant an influence has been on your choices and **justifying** the reasoning for making this judgement in terms of your overall artistry as a filmmaker.

A successful statement of intent will:

- **identify** the core idea of your production
- **describe** the key elements (such as technical and symbolic codes, representations, technologies and inspirations) that contribute to your artistry and style
- **evaluate** how your influences impacted the stylistic conventions and specific production practices to your production, and make judgements about how you used production technologies and post-production processes in personalised ways
- **evaluate** the impact of stylistic influences on your production overall and justify how significantly these influences shaped your production choices. Also evaluate how you adapted your artistic influences to your own style and the extent to which they furthered your own development as a filmmaker.

Planning your statement of intent

To help plan your statement of intent, you, as the moving-image media artist, might respond to the following evaluative prompts, which will be explored through the lens of Tim Burton's 1982 short film *Vincent*.

Vincent is a short, melodramatic horror film made using stop-motion animation. The story is of an imaginative boy called Vincent, who is obsessed with the gothic, macabre stories of Edgar Allan Poe and the films of Vincent Price. He pretends to be like Price and the characters of Poe's poems and stories, developing delusions about being a tortured artist. *Vincent* is the first film that established Tim Burton's artistry as a filmmaker, displaying his personal aesthetic (Expressionist, nightmarish, Gothic), technical expertise with animation forms and an interest in stories about outsiders who are rejected or misunderstood by society.

Weblink
Tim Burton's
Vincent (1982)

Album/Alamy Stock Photo

1 What are your ideas?

To develop a statement of intent, begin by concisely articulating the overall purpose, idea, message or creative vision behind your production. This is your intention, which will drive all your decisions during the production and post-production stages.

If Tim Burton was developing a statement of intent about *Vincent*, it might begin by describing his ideas and overall purpose in terms of artistry:

Vincent encapsulates my fascination with the 'monster' or outcast character, with Gothic themes and aesthetics, my own childhood love of Vincent Price films, and my desire to experiment with blending 2D and 3D animation in a stop-motion format. *Vincent* tells the story of a boy lost in his own imagination, embodying characters from Edgar Allan Poe's tales and his idol, Vincent Price. The protagonist, Vincent, is an outcast, misunderstood by his family, whose attempts to return him to reality only deepen his descent into a dark fantasy world. This narrative explores themes such as the clash between individuality and societal norms, and the romanticised torment of misunderstood creative souls. The deliberate lack of a happy, Disney-style ending was essential to preserving the film's melancholic tone and authenticity.

Hypothetical statement of intent

2 What are your key stylistic components?

Next, a statement of intent should contain description of the key stylistic conventions, features or elements used in your production and the influences on these. These stylistic elements could be described in terms of:

- **technologies**, such as lens choice, animation forms, visual effects
- **languages**, including technical codes, such as editing choices, shot sizes, camera angles or movements, and symbolic codes, such as colour and *miseenscéne* (e.g. **motifs** in terms of prop, costumes, settings)
- **representations**: how you are portraying places, ideas, people, emotions or events in your production.

In Tim Burton's hypothetical statement of intent about *Vincent*, this section might run as follows:

The film's aesthetic and symbolic codes are heavily influenced by German Expressionism, particularly *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919), evident in its black-and-white palette, towering buildings, stark contrasts and exaggerated, angular set designs. These stylistic influences serve to mirror Vincent's internal conflict, with the black/white contrasts symbolising the clarity/darkness of the delusions steadily consuming him. Thematically, I drew inspiration from Gothic literature, especially Edgar Allan Poe's *The Raven*. This is shown through elements such as thunder, black cats and bats combining to create a sinister otherworldly atmosphere that represents Vincent's psychological descent.

Hypothetical statement of intent

Figure 16.3 Comparing these two film stills, (left) Tim Burton's animated *Vincent* (1982) and (right) Robert Weine's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919), highlights the extent to which German Expressionism influenced the production design of *Vincent*. For example, in both films, angles are distorted beyond reality and shadows are painted onto sets.

3 What are your stylistic production practices?

After describing stylistic components, a statement of intent needs to articulate how these stylistic conventions will be used in the production, and the production practices that will be used to manifest these stylistic elements in visual or audio form. At this point, it is important to start evaluating the impact of your influences on stylistic conventions and specific production practices to your production.

Continuing to discuss *Vincent*, the statement of intent could read:

The key production practice I used in *Vincent* was 3D stop-motion animation with 2D handcrafted backgrounds and elements, which allowed me to completely control the aesthetic of the film and realise its Gothic tone (for instance, having tall buildings with arches). This was effectively supported by using the Expressionist technique of painting shadows onto the set, and exaggerating angles. The rhyming narration, which reflects Poe's poem *The Raven* (as well as the child-like rhymes of Dr Seuss, another stylistic influence), I recorded being read by Vincent Price himself, whose horror film persona I idolised as a child. His deep voice powerfully transforms the rhyming script into a haunting, melodramatic performance.

Hypothetical statement of intent

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4 What are your personalised processes?

The next stage of the statement of intent is making judgements about how you are using production technologies and post-production processes in a personalised way that supports your unique style and personal artistry. This involves articulating your unique style and personal artistry, linking your use of production technologies (such as camera work and lighting) and post-production processes (such as editing techniques and colour grading) to this style and making judgements about how you used production technologies and post-production processes in personalised ways. Explain how you have adapted influences to suit your own style.

For *Vincent*, Tim Burton's hypothetical statement of intent could construct the following evaluation of his personalised processes:

The blending of the production technologies of 3D stop-motion animation with 2D techniques significantly shaped *Vincent's* distinctive aesthetic and reinforced its narrative depth. Stop-motion's textured, imperfect quality heightened the fantasy atmosphere while allowing meticulous control over the exaggerated Expressionist elements in the set and character designs. When editing, I used match cuts to connect Vincent's real (as himself) and imagined (as Vincent Price) worlds, which was critical in emphasising his psychological descent, connecting his inner turmoil with his external surroundings. This approach directly reflects my personal commitment to creating visually immersive storytelling that blurs the line between fantasy and reality. The post-production score was guided by my personal fascination with horror films and tropes. The iconic motif of organ chords in a minor key created a sinister mood, reinforcing the Gothic tone. Juxtaposed against the rhyming narration, this mirrors *Vincent's* dual nature as both child-like and a tortured artist.

Hypothetical statement of intent

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5 What is the impact of your stylistic influences?

The final component of the statement of intent is evaluating the impact of stylistic influences on your production overall, and justifying how significantly these influences have shaped your production choices.

Questions to help structure this evaluation could include:

- What are the influences on my production's style or processes (these might be internal, external or contextual)?
- Why did you value some more than others?
- How have I used these influences in my production?
- What production choices have they informed?
- Why did I make these choices, in terms of my meaning or purpose?
- How effectively have the ways I've used these influences supported my overall purpose or meaning?

Were Tim Burton to reflect on these questions about *Vincent*, the final component of his statement of intent might have looked like this:

> Making *Vincent* firmly confirmed my love as a filmmaker of Gothic horror and Expressionism. German Expressionism inspired the visual design, particularly in the sharp contrasts, painted shadows and distorted architectural forms, which successfully evoke an unstable, fantastical world that reflects Vincent's inner psyche. Similarly, Gothic literature shaped the plot, themes and narration. Edgar Allan Poe's dark, grotesque sensibilities, especially in *The Raven*, inspired both the poetic narration and the theme of detachment from reality. Additionally, I was influenced to add a layer of humour and playfulness to *Vincent* by the whimsical, exaggerated style and rhymes of Dr Seuss to create a grotesque whimsy. These influences not only shaped the film's aesthetics but also guided my production choices, from the rhyming script to the handcrafted stop-motion techniques. Finally, Vincent Price's narration was not merely an homage but a vital narrative device; his iconic voice gave the story a gravitas that highlighted its connections to classic horror cinema. In *Vincent*, I merged these stylistic influences with my own vision to craft a deeply personal film, of both homage and originality, establishing the foundations of my creative identity.

Hypothetical statement of intent

16.1 ACTIVITIES

1. Imagine you are Baz Luhrmann, preparing notes on your stylistic intent, using the 'Red Curtain' approach to *mise en scène*. **Evaluate** and **apply literacy skills** to write a statement of intent for one of the films in the 'Red Curtain' trilogy.

2. Collaborate with a partner to **design**, **create** and **resolve** a short film exploring the theme of 'hope' that combines the style of a filmmaker with an unrelated film movement.

3. Plan a statement of intent that **evaluates** your production, concisely answering the following questions:

   a What are your ideas?
   - What is the overall purpose, idea, message or creative vision of your production?

   b What are your key stylistic components?
   - What are they key stylistic conventions, features or elements used in your production and what were your influences?

   c What are your stylistic production practices?
   - How will these stylistic conventions be used in your production?
   - What production practices will be used to manifest these stylistic elements in visual or audio form?
   - What is the significance, worth or value of these stylistic conventions and specific production practices, and what is the impact of your artistic influences on these? How has your production's overall meaning and purpose been impacted?

   d What are your personalised processes?
   - How are you using production technologies and post-production processes in a personalised way that supports your unique style and personal artistry, and how does this develop from the impact of your artistic influences?

   e What is the impact of your stylistic influences?
   - What are the influences on your production's style or processes (may be internal, external or contextual)?
   - How have you used these influences in your production?
   - What production choices have they informed?
   - Why did you value some more than others?
   - Why did you make these choices, in terms of your meaning or purpose?
   - How effectively have the ways you've used these influences supported your overall purpose or meaning?

17 Preparing for the external exam

WRITING IN RESPONSE TO AN EXTERNAL STIMULUS

For assessors, having students respond to unfamiliar stimuli and unseen questions encourages authentic and original responses. Although all exam stimuli will be brief to allow for re-watching during the examination, any form of moving-image media, such as trailers, short films, advertisements or movie excerpts from various genres can serve as effective exam stimuli.

When writing in response to an external, unseen stimulus, it is important to understand the key concepts, contexts of production and use, and cognitive processes of **analysis** and **evaluation**.

The **key concepts** of Film, Television & New Media (technologies, representations, audiences, institutions and languages) underpin how moving-image media and meaning is created. These key concepts are impacted by the contexts of production and use they are operating within.

The **contexts of production** can include:
- Who made the product?
  - What were their attitudes, values, beliefs and previous experiences?
- What was happening at the time the product was being made that might have influenced:
  - the technologies available to be used?
  - the attitudes, values and beliefs informing representations of particular characters?
  - the technical and symbolic codes able to be used, for example, bad weather or the reliance on timing of sunset/sunrise could constrain storytelling decisions?
- How was the product funded?
  - For example, an advertisement is a commercial product and will have the intention of selling a product or persuading the audience to think favourably of the brand.

- Where was the product made?
  - For instance, the Academy Award-winning documentary *20 Days in Mariupol* (2023) was filmed by journalists trapped in the Ukrainian city of Mariupol while it was being bombed by Russian forces in 2022. Due to the bombings, there was only one remaining location with an internet connection, which meant only 30 hours of footage were able to be saved, and the finished documentary is chaotic, fragmented and harrowing.
- Who is the intended target audience?
  - This can influence how representations are constructed; for example, content for small children tends to be brightly coloured, has simple narratives with a message and often contains music.
- Why was the product made?
  - What were the stakes for those involved in the product? For example, a documentary might allow a cause to be heard and succeed, or a filmmaker might risk arrest by making the story.

Contexts of use can include:
- When is the product being used?
  - For example, what time of day it is being released or shown? This will impact audiences able to be accessed.
- What technologies is it being used on?
  - For instance, is it being viewed on a cinema screen by some audiences but on a phone by others? How will this impact the communication of meaning in the film (for instance, it will make long shots hard to make out clearly)?
- How was the audience imagined?
  - Is the audience meant to buy what the product is selling? Does the product assume the audience will be passive or active? Does the filmmaker expect the audience to have a

specific degree of understanding about the issue, such as (in a series) to have seen the preceding film?

- How is the product being used?
  - Is the audience remaking or reworking the product, for instance, using in-game footage to make their own stories on YouTube?
  - Is the audience expected to share and interact with the product?
- How is the product restricted?
  - For example, by digital rights management in specific locations, or enabled through streaming service distribution?
- Who releases it?
  - What funding or access do they have?
  - What about the audiences – do they require good internet to watch it? What locations does this restrict access to?
  - How is viewing impacted by censorship or classification?

Analysis involves breaking the stimulus down into the moving-image media elements that have been used in terms of the focus key concept and the identified contexts of production and use. Analysis involves looking for connections between these elements and interpreting the meaning created. Think of analysing as being a detective investigating a crime: explain the clues you've seen and how you've linked the clues together to therefore reach a conclusion.

Evaluation of a stimulus requires you to reach a conclusion about how effectively the purpose of the stimulus has been fulfilled. This purpose could be creative, the communication of a specific meaning or about technical achievement. When evaluating, you must use evidence from the stimulus to justify how you reached this conclusion, and indicate judgement with appropriate vocabulary (such as 'successfully', 'purposefully').

Preparing to respond to an external stimulus

When responding to an unknown external exam stimulus, it is important to have a clear strategy for

New Africa/Shutterstock.com

Figure 17.1 The process of analysis – observing evidence, drawing connections, and interpreting meaning – is like a detective at the scene of a crime, deducing who committed the crime. Here, the detective identifies relevant evidence, describes what they see, connects these clues and reaches the conclusion that the crime was perpetrated by the person who belongs to the shoes!

using planning time. Just like an actor rehearsing for a performance or an athlete training for a race, students can develop an exam strategy and practise implementing this. This will develop the confidence and composure required for a high-quality examination experience.

Revise your understanding of key terminology, key concepts and contexts of production and use. It can be helpful to make flash cards in order to help your recall of this important content (see Figure 17.2).

Developing a 'plan of attack'

It is helpful to develop a 'plan of attack' for completing the response under exam conditions. This should encompass how to best select the question according to which key concept you have the strongest understanding of, how to analyse and evaluate the stimulus, and how to plan the response itself.

A plan of attack could involve the following strategies:

- Prepare your planning paper for note taking; for instance, draw up a table for analysing the stimulus, or a space for writing down key vocabulary and characteristics of the key concept.
- When opening the exam, read the contextual information and questions first, as opposed to watching all the stimulus options. It might save time to select the question based on which key concept you feel most confident focusing on, rather than spending time viewing all the stimuli.

- Unpack the question to determine what the focus of the analysis and evaluation needs to be.
- Read the context information carefully and view the stimulus, then delve into your wider knowledge of moving-image media to make deductions or inferences about the stimulus's contexts of production and use.
- Consider how these contexts relate to the key concept.
- Identify which components of the key concept need to be analysed in the stimulus to develop a viewpoint and therefore a thesis.
- Watch the stimulus several times to analyse in terms of the key concept. For example, if analysing the stimulus in terms of languages, one viewing could focus on identifying and noting down evidence relating cinematography, the next on *mise en scène*, the next on editing. It can be helpful, when looking for patterns and interconnections in relation to the key concept, to consider what jumps out at you. For instance, do you notice that whenever a particular character appears the sound changes? Note these relevant pieces of evidence down on the planning paper in specific detail using the rich language of film terminology.
- Form a viewpoint on what the stimulus's purpose is, and how effective the stimulus is at achieving this. This is your thesis, which provides an answer in response to the exam question.
- Use these notes to write the exam response.
- Allow time to check over your final response to confirm no key elements of your plan have been omitted, and that you have used correct spelling, punctuation and terminology.

Figure 17.2 A sample flash card. One side contains the key term, in this case, the key concept of languages. The reverse side of the card could contain the characteristics of the concept, good vocabulary or terminology to use in relation to the concept. Flash cards can be used to test yourself on recalling important content and terminology of Film, Television & New Media.

Writing the response

In Film, Television & New Media, unfamiliar stimulus examinations take the form of extended response analytical essays, where students are given a choice of unseen questions and stimuli. An analytical essay involves clearly communicating a viewpoint in response to the question, through an introduction, several body paragraphs and a conclusion.

A viewpoint requires the identification of the meaning communicated, two or three ways this has been communicated and an overall judgement about how well the meaning has been created. This is also known as a **thesis**. An extended response could use the structure set out in Table 17.1

In addition to these structural features, an effective extended response uses accurate and appropriate use of media-specific vocabulary (see Glossary, page 239) to describe relevant elements of the stimulus. For example, instead of saying that 'the camera moves close to the character', demonstrate deeper understanding by identifying the shot size, camera angle and camera movement. Throughout the whole extended response, links should be consistently made back to the key concept from the question.

Table 17.1 Sample structure for an extended response

INTRODUCTION	CLEARLY STATE THE THESIS IN RESPONSE TO THE QUESTION, INCLUDING IDENTIFYING THE KEY CONCEPT
Contexts paragraph	Outline the stimulus's contexts of production and use. Relate the information from the contextual statement accurately, then infer additional contextual information (e.g. target audience) from the stimulus and your wider knowledge. Try to relate the contextual information to the key concept.
Body paragraphs	Elaborate on the first method of meaning-making (e.g. sound) in a body paragraph, incorporating evaluation throughout.
	Elaborate on the second method of meaning-making (e.g. costumes) in a body paragraph, incorporating evaluation throughout.
	Elaborate on the third method of meaning-making (e.g. visual composition) in a body paragraph, incorporating evaluation throughout.
	In each paragraph, articulate your thinking. Like a detective, explain the clues you've seen (using film terminology), and how you've linked the clues together to reach a conclusion. Showing your thinking (what in the stimulus helped you to work this out) helps show the logic you used to reach a conclusion and helps make your thesis convincing. Finish each paragraph with a concluding sentence that ties back to the key concept and summarises the technique's overall effectiveness in communicating the identified meaning.
Conclusion	Reinforce how the thesis has been substantiated, summarising key reasons and linking back to the key concept.

17.1 ACTIVITIES

1 **Describe** the characteristics of each key concept (technologies, representations, audiences, languages, institutions) using the following template.

Description of the key concept in my own words:	Key terms of use when talking about this key concept:
How this key concept impacts the creation of meaning:	An image or picture that helps me remember this key concept:

2 **Create** flash cards to help you remember characteristics of the terms in the table, as well as 10 terms of your own choice. Give your flash cards to a partner and have your partner quiz you on the characteristics of each term. For each one you recall correctly, you get a point. Then, swap, and quiz your partner. Tally the points at the end.

Audiences	Technologies	Analysis
A body paragraph	An introduction	Evaluation
Contexts of production	Contexts of use	Representations
Institutions	Languages	A conclusion

3 As a class, brainstorm a word bank of **evaluative** language that can be **applied** throughout a response to signpost judgement, without using 'good' or 'effective'.
4 **Design** your plan for completing your exam response.
5 Select a short stimulus and a key concept. **Design** a question about this stimulus focusing on this key concept. **Research** the stimulus and **create** 50 words of contextual information, addressing each dot point under contexts lists. As a class, share these questions and contextual information to create a question bank.
6 Undertake a practice exam:
   • As a class, select three questions from the class question bank developed in Activity 5 to **create** a class practice exam.
   • Individually, **apply** your plan of attack in timed exam conditions to plan a response to one question.
   • Individually, **apply** literacy skills to write an introduction and paragraph for this question.
   • Swap your response with a partner. Use the evaluative language bank from Activity 3 and the textbook glossary to improve the response in terms of applying relevant terminology.

SPACED PRACTICE

The external assessment can ask questions from across Units 3 and 4 subject matter, so keeping the key concepts fresh in your mind is important.

Research shows that spacing out revision over a longer period of time, rather than cramming at the last minute, is better on long-term memory and your ability to transfer learning to new contexts (such as responding to unfamiliar stimulus). This is called spaced practice.

Plan an extended response analytical essay for each of the following questions. Ensure you make use of key FTVNM terminology. For each question, it is essential that you analyse and evaluate the stimulus, and justify your viewpoint with evidence from the stimulus.

Question 1

Stimulus: Trailer for *The Dressmaker* (2015, directed by Jocelyn Moorhouse): 2 minutes, 7 seconds.
Contextual information: This trailer for Jocelyn Moorhouse's 2015 film *The Dressmaker*, starring Kate Winslet and Liam Hemsworth, was created for release to American audiences in 2016. *The Dressmaker* is set in a rural Victorian town in 1950s Australia.
Question (Key concept – Representations): How effectively has the filmmaker portrayed people, place and events to communicate meaning in the trailer for *The Dressmaker*?

Question 2

Stimulus: Music video for Ok Go, *Upside Down & Inside Out* (2016, directed by Damian Kulasch & Trish Sie): 3 minutes, 7 seconds.
Contextual information: The music video for *Upside Down & Inside Out* was created using a nose-diving aircraft to create a zero-gravity environment. This allowed them to perform stunts impossible at normal gravity. The music video was made with cooperation from Russia's S7 Airlines and features two aerialist acrobats acting as air crew. Band member Damian Kulasch stated that he got the idea for the music video from emerging media discussions about commercial space travel.
Question (Key concept – Technologies): To what extent have technologies been used to create meaning in the music video for *Upside Down & Inside Out*?

Question 3

Stimulus: In Figure 17.3, images of different scale and transparency are aligned in a composition.
Contextual information: Radio telescopes capture invisible signals from space. They can be used to map

Resource
Scaffolding
Questions 1–5

Weblink
The Dressmaker
(2015): Official
Trailer

Weblink
*Ok Go, Upside
Down &
Inside Out* (2016)

these signals or communicate with spacecraft. The Tidbinbilla dishes near Canberra are part of NASA's (US) deep space network, upgraded for $706 million. This shot depicts an iris-reveal dissolve which superimposes a child holding a book more than 100 years old.

Question (Key concept – Languages): How do the signs, symbols and codes create meaning from this image? Justify your assumptions about audience interpretation of the elements, considering social, political or economic factors. Evaluate the specific production practices used to communicate a conceptual, technical or creative purpose.

Source: author created, D. Sinclair

Figure 17.3 Mastery of technologies and processes is demonstrated by perfect alignment of the graphic match, and a particular dissolve. Here, an iris reveal transition is used to dissolve an entire object over a section of the shot. The meaning of the media language alters the representation of each object. The accurate alignment helps push the simile into a metaphor. A precious book, open hands, direction of the bowl and objects themselves all carry meaning according to accepted signs, symbols and codes.

Question 4

Stimulus: *Sonic the Hedgehog 3* (2024), 'Maria meets Shadow' scene.

Contextual information: *Sonic the Hedgehog 3* is the third installment in the *Sonic the Hedgehog* movie franchise. In this film, audiences are introduced to the latest villain character: Shadow. This sequence is Shadow's flashback to a time when he was happy. This scene explores why Shadow is the way he is now and why he has certain motivations by the time Sonic and the gang meet him.

Question (Key concept – Audiences): Analyse the technical and symbolic codes that tell you who the target audience is for this film. **Evaluate** the effectiveness of these technical and symbolic codes in communicating their narrative for the intended audience. **Justify** your response with examples from the sequence.

Question 5

Stimulus: Nofilmschool Article: Is Netflix creating a cinematic Hell that we can't escape?

Contextual information: Netflix is a popular streaming service that requires a paid subscription. Originally, Netflix sourced films from other institutions and streamed the content on their platform. Since 2013, Netflix has also branched into creating its own television series and films under its own institutional brand. However, Netflix's programming strategy has been criticised by some, keeping the visual style the same across various streamed media artworks. Some examples of television series that have been accused of this are: *Sandman* (2022–present), *The Witcher* (2019–present) and *One Piece* (2023–present) live action series.

Question (Key concept – Institutions): Analyse the Nofilmschool article by 'breaking down' the main arguments and examples given, and then consider counter arguments. **Interpret** any prejudices or pre-conceived biases that you think the writer might or might not have. **Evaluate** the validity of the argument and the effect Netflix might have and its potential to shape future directions of the industry. **Justify** your response with examples from the sequence.

Weblink
Sonic the Hedgehog 3 (2024): Maria meets Shadow scene

Weblink
Nofilmschool

GLOSSARY

180-degree rule   Screen geography principle of not crossing the camera reversing 'line of interest' without justification.

30-degree rule   Shooting and editing for continuity, but moving the relative camera position more than 30 degrees when showing the same subject in consecutive shots.

360-degree cameras   Cameras that capture a full sphere of vision, single or multiple lens versions; can be called 'omnidirectional'.

Act (noun):   Significant section in a story made up of individual scenes that may bring new locations, timeframes or characters to the story. The media convention comes from live productions when changes in acts allow the crew to reset a stage.

Action line   Chain of action events that constitutes the main plot line in a narrative (see also *relationship line*).

Additive colour   Colour mixing system for light where adding all colours produces white.

Additive lighting   Conventional way of targeting an object of interest by directing light on it, or supplementing a natural light source to gain the desired brightness.

Aesthetic   Term from philosophy that essentially means the appreciation of beauty. In film, it often refers to the ways in which a visual image is constructed as appealing.

Affective   Knowledge and understandings of feelings, emotions, values, beliefs and personal motivations.

Affordances   'Action possibilities' that are made available by the nature or design of something.

Algorithm   Set of instructions or a procedure or formula used in a calculation, usually by a computer.

Allegory/allegorical   A cultural text that contains a hidden story, often one that aims to teach moral values or deeper truths.

Analogue media   Media forms that are sequential and linear, and use materials from the real world, such as tape or film, to transmit their message.

Analyse   To examine or break down into parts in order to identify meaning or similarities or differences; analysis of media products involves applying an understanding of the key concepts and the contexts of production and use.

Anamorphic distortion   The horizontal squeezing or stretching of an image while the vertical information remains correct.

Animatic   Pre-production tool used in filmmaking and animation where storyboard images are edited together with intended timing and sounds/dialogue. This creates a rough version of the production to test if it is a workable concept.

Animation   'Bring life' to non-live action images with the illusion of movement.

Antagonist   Character who acts against the protagonist, as an opponent or adversary. Also of classical Greek origin, the word 'antagonist' is built from *anti*, meaning 'against', and *agonistes*, meaning 'one who is engaged in a struggle'.

Anthropomorphised   Giving human characteristics, emotions or features to animals, objects or other nonhuman entities.

Aperture   Variable opening in a lens which allows the light rays to pass through to the 'picture plane', where the image is created.

Apply   To communicate meaning using literacy skills in the selection of language conventions, subject specific terminology and appropriate referencing conventions.

Arc shot   A circular tracking shot with the subject in the centre.

Arcade video games   Standalone game cabinets with built-in controls designed for public spaces.

Art department   Responsible for buying or making props, costumes and backgrounds to match the production needs.

Artefactual   Object that has been created by a human, usually a cultural object or some kind of tool or technology.

Art installations   Usually 3D and temporary, artworks that change the experience of the display space.

Artistry   The sophisticated integration of technical mastery, aesthetic understanding and creative vision in the production of audiovisual content.

Assistant director (AD)   Person who assists the director with coordinating production activity and supervising cast and crew.

ATAR   Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank is a numerical placement of students up to 99.95.

'Atmos' track   Atmosphere recording of consistent ambient sound to mask audio edits.

Attribution   Acknowledging credit for contributing concepts or authors, or indicating a personal opinion (as opposed to fact) in narration, superimposed titles, or article by line in screen media.

Audience availability   Time that people have to view media products.

Audience expectations   Beliefs audiences have about a future media experience.

Audience   Individuals or a group of people who are involved in using and making meaning of some kind of media product, and for whom that media product was made. Also a Key Concept in the FTVNM syllabus.

Audience 'reading' practices   Ways audiences can understand texts. They include dominant readings, negotiated readings and resistant readings.

Augmented reality (AR)   When technology (such as a smartphone or AI glasses) is used to superimpose images or video over a view of the real world.

Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA)   Federal government body that regulates aspects of media content and technology.

Auteur   (French) Literally means 'author' but in film studies, it usually refers to a director who is widely respected and seen to have a particular artistic style.

Auteur **Structuralism**   A type of analysis that combines the study of a director's identity with another form of study called 'Structuralism' (*see Structuralism*).

Avant garde   (French) Ahead of the crowd. Avant garde films are those that use the codes and conventions of filmmaking in new ways to advance the artistic form and to challenge the audience.

Back focus   The forming of a sharp image behind the last lens element inside a camera that coincides with the recording picture plane.

Backlighting   Light placement behind the object being filmed from the camera point of view.

Barn doors   Small, adjustable metal panels fitted by hinge to the film light itself to cut the light, creating areas of shadow around the beam.

Barrel of the camera   (To look down) an eyeline directly into the lens.

Binary   Consisting of a division into two.

Binary opposition   Paired opposites that are often engaged in a power struggle, such as active/passive, good/bad, rich/poor.

Bollywood   Portmanteau word for prolific film production area of India, centred around Mumbai (formerly known as Bombay), named by combining Bombay and Hollywood.

Bots   Self-sustaining autonomous programs that perform tasks.

Bounce-board   Rigid reflector of pure white that creates a more diffuse effect than direct light.

British New Wave   A film movement in the British social realism tradition that was socially conscious and focused on the concerns and hardships of ordinary working class people.

Broadcast   Communication that is spread widely and directed towards a broad or mass audience.

C-stand (Century stand)   A robust, articulated stand for clamping equipment in place, such as cutters. Originally a brand name.

Call-to-action   Motivating phase of purchase or response message to an audience.

Call sheet   Shared crew document with location, times and other requirements for a particular filming day.

Camera angle   The height and vertical direction a camera is pointing, usually defined by the relationship to characters but may also be in reference to an assumed floor within the scene.

Caricatures   An exaggerated misrepresentation made to ridicule.

Case study   Research method investigating a particular product, question or real-life situation.

Catch lights   Directed specifically for eye highlights.

Catfishing   Creation of false online identities to bait or manipulate others.

Causal agent   Person, object or event that affects the course of the narrative.

Ceiling bounce   Technique for quickly producing softlight by aiming lights up for interiors.

Cel animation   Celluloid transparencies with hand-painted characters for each filmed frame.

Censorship   Prohibition of sections of a text considered unsuitable to be seen by audiences.

Central framing   The focal point of interest is positioned in the middle of the frame, often with

symmetry in the background space on either side; more common now that smaller screens are used for viewing.

CGI (computer-generated imagery) *See computer generated images/computer animation.*

Character arc Journey of change over the course of, and in response to, plot events.

Character images Images of characters, often drawn for pitching video games.

Character outline Information that may go beyond the plot and physical appearance, such as back story and personality traits.

Chiaroscuro High-contrast lighting that produces deep shadows – an effect produced by low key lighting.

Choose-your-own-adventure stories A form of participatory story with branching plot possibilities that allows the audience to choose different pathways to different outcomes.

Cine-theatre Live drama presentations that integrate screen performances in the production.

Cinéma vérité Style of filmmaking, especially of documentaries, that attempts to authentically and realistically portray people and events, avoiding technical artifice through the use of handheld cameras, jump cuts, non-professional actors and so on.

Circular plot structure Narrative structure that begins at the end of the story before relating the chain of events that led to that conclusion; a common device in *film noir.*

Clapper/loader Job on set to manage the recording or film media and identifying it, including via the clapperboard.

Claymation Stop-motion using 3D, flexible, clay-like models.

Clickbait Attention-grabbing headlines or images linked to further information that is likely to be of lesser quality or relevance.

Cliff-hanger Plot scenario generating excitement through audience uncertainty.

Climax Point of high tension or drama in which the protagonist faces success or failure.

Closed/tight framing Shots where the framing does not show very much space around the subjects.

Code System of signs that gain their meaning by shared understanding.

Cognitions Thinking and processing skills that are written as action verbs to structure syllabus and unit objectives, content, assessments and criteria.

Cognitive bias Tendency to interpret facts or believe mistruths due to alignment with existing opinions or ways of thinking.

Collision of images Juxtaposition of two images with different meanings to create a third meaning; first identified in early Soviet cinema, the technique formed the basis of almost all Hollywood special effects before the arrival of computer-generated imagery.

Colour correction Compensating for incorrect camera white balance in available light.

Commutation Transferring or commuting a code into something else to discover its meanings.

Complementary Colours opposite on the colour wheel producing high vibrance at junctures.

Complementary metal-oxide semiconductor (CMOS) Type of digital component in computing that can be used as an image sensor in cameras, as electrons are produced in response to light hitting the chip.

Complication/conflict In classical narrative, the story's chain of events is set in motion when the orientation, normality or equilibrium at the start is disturbed by the introduction of complications or conflicts; only when these are resolved can equilibrium be restored.

Compression of time Shortening screen time through editing to move the story forward.

Computer-generated imagery (CGI)/computer animation Image movement generated using digital software, often using techniques such as character models and automated 'in-betweening' of the key frames for movement.

Congruency Alignment of the (ad) message with the brand identity.

Connotation Associated thoughts that any particular sign brings to mind, for example a rose has connotations of love.

Construction A human creation constructed out of selected details, rather than a complete and natural creation.

Context Conditions surrounding the text. May include the time of production, language, society, natural environment, etc.

Context of production and use   Conditions surrounding the production, use and consumption of a media product.

Continuity   Maintenance of the same actions, dialogue, costume, setting details and props in different shots or takes of the same scene. When this does not occur it is said to be a continuity error.

Continuity editing   Editing style favoured in Hollywood and designed to create consistency and smooth progress in the narrative. Cuts are made on action to distract audience attention from the transition. Also known as 'invisible' style.

Contra-zoom, dolly zoom, triple-zoom reflex   Specialised camera zoom that allows the camera to zoom in while at the same time tracking back in the opposite direction, creating a disorienting change in perspective, also called a trombone shot.

Contrapuntal sound   Music or other sound that contrasts with the film image, providing a commentary on it or creating a third meaning. Also called asynchronous sound.

Contrast ratio   The ratio of the intensity between the brightest and darkest areas of lighting.

Control   Power that is wielded over others and reduces their agency.

Conventions   Accepted ways of doing things and repeated patterns that audiences are familiar with.

Convergence   Blurring of boundaries between different Telecommunications media, such as between television and the computer, or between text, images, video and sound in multimedia products.

Corporate advertising   Promotion of a company's image and brand identity and standing, rather than specific products.

Counter-stereotype   Portrayal that deliberately sets out to challenge a dominant stereotype, for example by portraying a minority group in a more positive light.

Crane shot   Device by which a camera is moved up or down a mechanical arm or crane, or raised and lowered at an angle to create a special effect.

Crash zoom   *See zip zoom.*

Create   To bring a media product into existence from the pre-production stage using production and post-production technologies.

Creatives   Advertising agency staff responsible for the conceptual content rather than technical production.

Crowdfunding   The practice of funding a project by collecting money from a large number of people who each contribute a relatively small amount, typically via the Internet.

Cultist   Someone who is a follower of cult texts.

Culture jamming   Protesting by disrupting the expected social interpretations of media.

Cutter   Rigid black panel to cast a sharp-edged shadow from a particular light.

Datasphere   A term popularised by futurist Douglas Rushkoff, referring to the global digital information space.

Deconstruct   Breaking down a media product or other text into its constituent parts in order to critically examine its meanings.

Deep fake   Convincing digital construction of an event or context which never occurred.

Deep focus   Film technique using lots of light, a small camera aperture, a wide-angle lens and fast film, which ensures that everything in the shot, from foreground to distant background, is in focus.

Deep staging   *See deep focus.*

Deep swaps   Using AI to map alternative faces over moving images of people.

Demography   Mapping of segments in society that share similar characteristics. For example, youth is a demographic group that shares the characteristic of being in their teens. Other demographic groups could be based on income, ethnicity, gender, etc.

Denotation   In communication, the naming or describing of a sign, for example 'a rose is a tightly petalled flower with a strong scent'. See also connotation - the meaning of a denoted sign.

Denouement   Final stage of the narrative when all the loose ends are tied up.

Desensitising   Tendency for audiences to become less empathetic or shocked with increasing exposure to graphic content, such as gun violence.

Design   To plan media products using the accepted conventions of pre-production formats and to justify the choices made, considering appropriate health and safety practices.

Diegesis   The world of the story including the setting, characters and events.

Diegetic   Within the world of the story and available to the characters.

Diegetic element   Anything that is from the world of the story that can affect the plot, characters or setting.

Diegetic sound   Sound from within the story (the diegesis) that can be heard by the characters.

Diffusers   Translucent physical objects to soften light sources and the resultant shadows.

Digital actors   Computer-generated actors that can be based on a human actor, or be created without a human as a reference; also referred to as 'synthespians'.

Digital asset   Objects such as props, modelled in or imported to a digital environment.

Digital defocus   Using software to blur a part of the image, making it appear that the depth of field has been exceeded.

Digital footprint   Records of interaction online of downloads, contacts, sites visited, etc. stored across various networks.

Digital media   Media that use a binary code system to represent information.

Director of photography (DOP, DP)   Person responsible for the look of cinematography by manipulating exposure and lighting choices.

Disequilibrium   State of continuing upheaval that occurs once the disruption has upset the equilibrium and begun the chain of events.

Disinformation   Deliberate spread of incorrect information to support a particular agenda.

Dispatcher   According to Propp's theory of narrative character roles, the character who sends the hero off on the quest.

Distinct media   Separate media platforms.

Disturbance/disruption   Action that begins the chain of events and upsets the equilibrium.

Divergence   Process of multiplying the forms of delivery of a media product and also diversifying media platforms, devices and formats. Seen as the opposite of convergence, but also can be part of the same overall process.

Diversification   Process of enlarging a company by taking over or merging with other companies.

Dollying shot   Tracking shot in which the camera is moved through a scene by means of a dolly (a tripod on wheels).

Double exposure   Single image formed of two images, created through exposing film to light twice, or layering one image over another through editing. (Also see 'superimposition'.)

Echo chamber   A media environment that presents the users' own opinions back to them, by way of selecting 'agreeable' messages. Similar to an enclosed space bouncing back one's own voice.

Engagement   Level of involvement or immersion in a media text.

Environment images   Images of story world settings often drawn for pitching video games.

Episodic stories   Media text broken into distinct self-contained narratives with the main narrative continued across episodes.

Equilibrium   State of normality that exists at the beginning or end of a narrative.

eSafety Commissioner   Australian Federal Government office with powers and responsibility in relation to digital content platforms and companies involved in digital media.

Establishing shots   The shot in the scene that gives the maximum geographic or time information in the one frame; traditionally the first shot.

Ethical dilemma   Ambiguous moral situation in which solving at least two problems may be mutually harmful to the other issue, or create more issues.

Evaluate   To make a judgement about, assess or determine the merit, worth or value of a media product.

Expansion of time   Technique of film editing that draws out some events or actions to create or increase tension.

Experience economy   Transformation of experiences into saleable products (commodification), often seen as the next step for the marketing of entertainment and media products.

Experimentation   Trying out or testing new ideas or methods in the film or media making process, especially in order to discover or prove something.

Exposition   The central argument of a documentary. Also a stage in the structure of a narrative, where background information about characters or the story world is given before the main conflict begins.

Exposure   Amount of light creating an image in the camera and the subsequent apparent brightness.

Eye-trace   An editing characteristic defined by editor Walter Murch in his book, *In the Blink of an Eye*, whereby the editor works to control and guide what the audience sees.

Eyelines   Imaginary line drawn from a person's eyes to the focus of their attention; what they are looking at.

F-stop   Calibrated settings of focal ratio according to a formula of focal length and diameter that determine the amount of light passing through the lens.

Fake news   False information knowingly presented as factual by borrowing news conventions.

Fan   Enthusiast or someone who is highly engaged.

Field of view (FOV)   The extent of a scene that is visible to the audience at point in time. FOV is related to depth of field and focal length.

File footage   Pre-recorded video library images supplied by others.

Film noir   American movie genre associated with the 1940s and 1950s; moody and bleak, unsettling films with dark, shadowy themes about life and crime in the underworld of big cities.

Foreshadowing   A device by which the early introduction of a seemingly unimportant element discreetly hints at a later development in the story.

Filter bubble   The way algorithms cause individuals to be isolated in their thinking, only consuming narrow and specific information and circulating among others who share the same opinions.

Firewall   Hardware and software barriers to limit access to computer networks based on authorisation, or subscriptions in the case of paywalls.

First-person shooter (FPS)   Games using player point-of-view as a character controlling a weapon.

First-person view (FPV)   A camera position that functions as the eyes of a character, especially if moving through a game environment. Also a view from a drone camera.

First act   Initial section of a story that typically establishes the protagonist, their main problem, and goal.

First cinema   Mainstream commercial cinema such as Hollywood production.

Flat staging   *See shallow depth of focus.*

Flats   Theatre and film term for walls built for a set.

Fly-through   Shots moving through openings, executed digitally or with trick sets, cable shot or drones.

Fly on the wall   When the filmmaker attempts to hide their own presence when recording events. The purpose is to avoid any direct effect upon unfolding action.

Focus puller   Crew member responsible for calculating depth of field and determining the desired point of focus or executing an accurate focus pull.

Foil   Narrative character who, by way of contrast, highlights the strong, positive characteristics of the protagonist.

Foley   Studio-recorded sounds to replace or enhance location recordings of objects and incidental noise.

Foley artist   Sound studio worker operating microphones with objects and materials to re-create 'spot' sound effects.

Follow focus   One subject is kept in focus regardless of movement or effect on the rest of the shot.

Follow shots   Camera view from behind that maintains the subject in the shot while moving, such as game views; also a drone pre-set mode.

FOMO   Fear of missing out; strategy for consumer motivation and action.

Foreshadowing   Device by which the early introduction of a seemingly unimportant element discreetly hints at a later development in the story.

Fourth wall   Division between the audience and the fictional world on the screen or stage. The idea comes from the traditional indoor theatre stage which presents three walls to the audience, with the fourth being the open space under the proscenium arch through which the audience watches.

Frames per second (FPS)   Film speed.

French New Wave   A film movement that came about when an influx of young directors took over from France's old-style movie makers in the late 1950s.

Frequency   Regularity of audience exposure to a media product.

Gaffer   Person in charge of the electrics on set, often the owner of the lighting equipment and contributor to its creative placement.

Gain   Electronic amplification of the picture signal to increase the apparent sensitivity to light and boost dark images.

Gels   Coloured transparencies to alter lighting.

Generation   People born and living at about the same period of time, or the time taken for a population to be born, grow up and have their own children – generally assumed to be about 25–30 years.

Generative AI   Artificial intelligence capable of generating apparently original media, based on the material it was 'trained' on.

Genre   Category or type made up of repeated sets of codes and conventions.

German Expressionism   Style of film production that emerged in Germany after the First World War and lasted until the mid 1920s; typically featured horror narratives, eccentric, bizarre characters and performances, and distorted sets and *mise en scène*.

Globalisation   Worldwide interlinking of communications (and trade) networks.

Gobo   Stencil for casting shadows, technically placed on the light itself, often used in stage productions.

Graphic match   Two images edited together where the content of the pictures have similarities of a graphic or image-based nature. These could be of shapes in the picture content, scenery, lighting design or character actions.

Graphics interchange format (GIF)   A type of file format that supports animations.

Greyscale   Range of tone (or value) from black to white without any hue.

Grifflon   Large fabric suspended in a trampoline-type frame, usually with a black and reverse white side.

Grips   General rouseabout in production (from circus), deals with equipment to support lighting rigs and equipment to support the camera, such as tripods, dollies and cranes.

Hair light   Illuminating hair from above or behind.

Haptics   Simulated sense of touch to accompany media.

Haptic visuality   In reference to celluloid film, is the 'look and feel' related to the surface texture of the film, which in turn affects the general aesthetic in the image produced. Some people argue that this is the 'grain' of the image.

Hays Code   20th century censorship rules applied to Hollywood.

High key   Lighting with bright fill and key lights, bringing low contrast softlighting, often from a physically high position.

Hollywood   Physical location in California; also the institutions and systems of filmmaking that evolved there.

Homage   Demonstration of respect or dedication to someone or something, often by reference, allusion or imitation.

Hook   Concept or image to snare audience attention.

Horizontal integration media   Industry diversification through 'sideways' expansion; for example, a movie company spreading its activities into other leisure industry areas such as holiday resorts or theme parks.

Hue   The pure colour aspect of an object or light source.

Hybrid   Something made from the combination of two (or more) different elements.

Hybrid texts   Texts that use combinations of genre features from several different genres. The result of this combination is a 'hybrid text'. For example, animation combined with documentary.

Hybridity   The process of blending of elements from different cultural forms, genres or movements to create new conventions and practices.

Hyper-reality   The more-real-than-real creations of media technologies or media institutions (e.g. Disneyland) that blur the lines between what is real and what is a simulation.

Icons   Signs that visually resemble the object or action they refer to.

Ideation   The formation of an idea.

Identify   To put yourself in the place of or to temporarily take on the perspective of a character in a media text.

Identity   A sense of what differentiates the self from others and also a sense of belonging within a group and/or culture. Can also refer to the outcome of the process of audiences using the media to construct their sense of the self. e.g. taste in music and films, merchandise, etc.

Immersion   Being deeply engaged and involved in a media text to the extent that you feel like you are almost really there. The content may also offer the potential for interaction. See also presence.

Immersive media   Media forms that allow for high levels of direct audience engagement, interaction and participation, such as video games, VR, AR and MR.

In-game cinematics   Animated video sequences in a digital game that interrupt the gameplay but progress the story or introduce characters.

Incident light rays   Light emitted directly from the light source.

Infodemic   High volume of information including mis- and disinformation that can overwhelm the audience's ability to process.

Innovation   Act of introducing new ideas; being original and creative in thinking.

Institutions   (Key concept) The organisations that make it possible to have media products and that enable and constrain media production and use.

Intellectual property (IP)   Copyrighted material that is the result of creativity.

Interactive   Allowing a reciprocal or two-way flow of information between the user and the media text or media platform.

Interactive documentary   An online documentary that uses interactivity as central to the audience experience.

Interactivity   The state of having two-way communications through an exchange of signals such that the user perceives themselves as having some control over outcomes.

Intertextuality   Process by which one text makes references to other texts to create more complex meanings.

Inverse-square law   Formula for calculating various forms of radiation according to the distance from the source.

Isometric/open world   Game genre that presents an aerial view of diagonals at 30 degrees or similar, and no single prescribed player path.

Italian Neo-realism   A film movement of the mid 1940s to mid 1950s that set out to reveal the often harsh everyday realities of life in postwar Italy using natural, often unscripted dialogue, non-professional actors and documentary-style location shooting. Common themes are poverty, oppression, injustice and desperation.

J-cut   Overlapping sound edit where the next scene is preempted by sound before the picture is seen. *See also L-cut.*

Jib arm   Small crane arm, usually mounted on a tripod.

Jingle   Tune or song lyrics associated with a product or ad campaign.

Jump cut   Sudden cut between shots, often used by realist directors to remind the audience that the film is a construction and to encourage viewers to make their own judgements on the film's 'reality'.

Juxtapositioning   To place two images or objects side-by-side to create an effect, often a contrasting effect.

Key concepts   Essential areas of study in Media Studies around the world, originating with the British Film Institute in the 1980s.

Keystone correction   Skewing of rectangular video into a trapezoid to correct for projecting that is not from 90 degrees to the screen.

L-cut   Overlapping sound edit where the previous scene audio trails over the following one.

Landscape   A frame orientation where the width is greater than the height.

Languages   (Key concept) The systems of signs, codes and conventions that help to create the meanings audiences get from media products.

Large language model (LLM)   A form of artificial intelligence trained on a large amount of language data.

LED (light emitting diode)   Type of light using an electrical component that produces energy-efficient bright light.

LED panels   LED TV display technology and also a diffuse lighting option with multiple evenly distributed LEDs, often with adjustable colour temperature.

Leitmotif   Sound or melody that is associated with a particular character, idea or event; for example, the ominous shark notes from Jaws.

Letterbox   Horizontal space above and below a wider aspect ratio image playing on a horizontally narrower screen.

Light field   Photography systems which capture extra light information and allow post-shoot adjustment.

Light meter   Device for measuring appropriate exposure at points within the set.

Localisation   Grouping together (e.g. via the internet and social media) of clusters of people with similar interests that could be literally local, or worldwide but with a narrow set of interests in common.

Log line   A one-sentence concept or story proposal used for pitching to media production institutions.

Low-key lighting   Low-intensity key light, mounted low, which casts shadows across the faces of the actors and areas of the set.

Ludification   The practice of gamifying or inserting game-like or playful elements in various aspects of culture, such as media texts.

Machine learning   Computer programming using feedback from previous results to predict and select future responses. Accuracy of prediction dramatically increases with data volume and repetition of scenarios.

Magenta   Red-purple colour, when combined with cyan and yellow produces white light.

Main unit   Primary filming unit dealing with main actors and scenes.

Mainstream   Considered normal, with beliefs and ideas that are accepted by most people in the context of the times.

Malinformation   Information based on facts that misleads because it is being used out of the original context.

Marks   Pre-determined places for actors to stand to suit camera focus, lighting set up or stunt execution.

Match-cut   Strong similarity of size, shape, movement and placement of visual elements in consecutive shots. (*see Graphic match*)

Mattes   A section of photograph or video which has an additional layer of image applied to mask the original, creating an illusion through the combination of pictures.

Meaning   Importance or significance of something – in this case, of a sign, code or convention.

Mechanics   (Game feature) In-game digital features and affordances (*see Affordances*) that determine the nature of the gameplay.

Media literacy   The ability to operate, code and decode media.

Media processes   Stages of media production for a media text in each media form, beginning with the idea and moving through to final distribution.

Media texts   Products of the media.

Mediation   The way the media puts together representations of people, places, ideas and events that are shaped by the institutions' own ideologies, practices and technologies.

Mentor-antagonist   Character who causes problems for the protagonist but eventually teaches them to begin a process of personal growth.

Metacognitive   Knowledge and understandings about the processes of thinking itself; thinking about thinking.

Migratory consumption   The consumption of media products by starting on one platform and 'migrating' to others.

Miniature effect   Artificially blurring the foreground and distant background of the picture, leaving in focus a central horizontal slice of the frame, thereby giving the impression that miniature scale models are being filmed. Sometimes also called tilt-shift photography.

Mise en scène   (French - 'put in the scene') includes all the elements that together produce the look and feel of a shot, including set, costume, make-up, acting, props and colour.

Misinformation   Information or content that is incorrect, made-up or laden with errors that is spread, whether through a deliberate attempt to deceive or not, as opposed to disinformation, which is intentionally deceptive.

Mixed reality (MR)   A blend of the digital and real, using mixed-reality glasses/headsets.

Mobile journalism   Journalism using mobile phones.

Mockumentary   A moving-image media text that uses the conventions of a serious documentary to present fictional information, often as satire.

Monochromatic   Images using shades and tints from a single hue, also commonly describing black and white in photography.

Monopoly   Market dominated by a single service provider or seller.

Montage   A sequence of shots that are connected thematically and condense either time or place, often set to music.

Montage   (Soviet) Theory developed by Russian filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein that demonstrated how the juxtaposition of separate shots with different meanings could create a third meaning.

Motif   Object, symbol, image or idea that recurs (usually several times) in a film, literature or other art form.

Motion-capture   Actors are filmed live wearing sensors or other markers on a body suit or their faces to capture movement/expressions. This information is translated into digital models and animation to enhance the realism and/or efficiency of CGI technologies.

Motivated move   The camera is visually prompted by on-screen movement or composition.

Narrative   How the storyline is communicated to the audience. Narrative is the way of telling the story.

Narrative mode (or broad genre)   Type of media text that uses storytelling codes and conventions such as plot, character and setting. Some academics refer to narrative as a mode, while some refer to it as a broad overarching genre.

National cinema   Films produced in the context of a particular nation that seem to express that nation's social, cultural and political identity.

Naturalisation   Process whereby something is repeated often enough that it eventually comes to be seen as a normal or natural portrayal.

ND (neutral density)   Filter to darken the image without any change in the colour.

Negative green   Use of magenta to neutralise the reflected green from studio wall bounce.

Negative space   Vacant space around shapes, forms or characters without points of visual interest, into which some other action or character may appear.

Niche audience   Audience segment that is very specialised in terms of interests.

Nihilism   A philosophical worldview beginning in the late 19th century whereby everything in the world and life is believed to be meaningless, often leading to a rejection of moral and religious principles. Nihilism influenced postmodern art movements during the 20th century in particular.

Nollywood   A portmanteau word combining Hollywood and Nigeria, and referring to the large-scale film production industry based in Nigeria, the world's second largest after 'Bollywood' (the Indian film industry).

Non-diegetic   Outside the world of the story and available to the audience but not available to the characters.

Non-diegetic elements   Anything the audience can hear or see that is not directly from the world of the story (such as orchestral music used to heighten emotion).

Non-diegetic sound   Sound from outside the world of the movie that cannot be heard by the characters, including soundtrack, narration and voice-overs.

Objective camera angle   Implying a third person or unseen observer with connotation of witness, or stationary cameras without acknowledged presence during filming.

Objective truth   Truth that is not affected by any human bias. It is arguable that there is no such thing as objective truth in film.

Objective view   *See objective camera angle.*

Oeuvre   (French) A director's body of work.

Oligopoly   Market dominated by a few service providers or sellers.

One-liner   *See log line.*

Oppositional   Used in relation to readings that are 'against the grain' or opposite to what the creator intended.

Orbit shots   A circular tracking shot filmed off the ground, primarily by drone, with the subject in the centre.

Outdoor campaign   Billboard and bus stop ad placement beyond electronic media.

Outline   A short description of a media proposal.

Over-removal   Deletion of public comments that over-cautiously limits contentious material, especially by self-censoring platforms.

Overshot   Extremely high camera angle giving a bird's-eye view of the subject.

Over-the-shoulder shot   Almost a first-person view; the framing keeps some of the character in shot while showing their perspective.

Panning shot   From 'panorama', meaning to sweep the camera from one side of a scene to the other.

Panorama modes   Capture of entire horizon in a continuous 'ribbon' image.

Paparazzi   Photographers who profit from candid images of high profile individuals.

Parallel sound   Music or sound that is parallel in meaning to the image or conveys a similar message to that in the image. Also called synchronous sound.

Parody   An imitation of something in order to ridicule or satirise it.

Passive footprints   Digital history of users acquired without their knowledge or explicitly asking for permission to accumulate data.

Paywall   Access to additional content or features of a particular product, software or service is blocked for users unless they purchase access through either a one-time fee or subscription.

Peripheral vision   The edge of sight surrounding the central vision.

Personal computers (PCs)   Consumer level devices capable of different functions due to running software programs.

Pick-ups   Shots which require an unplanned return to a previous set-up or location.

Pillarbox   Vertical space either side of an image to allow a smaller video to play within a wider screen.

Pipe dolly   Camera dolly that uses plastic plumbing pipes for tracks and skateboard trucks.

Pitch   An extended presentation of an idea for media production.

Pitch deck   Visually supported presentation of proposed production elements that is often the basis for the show bible.

Pixel   The smallest unit of the image including the device to capture or display a digital image.

Platform   Medium, site or service that operates as means of delivering media content to audiences.

Platformisation   The increasing influence of digital platforms and the ways platforms are changing practices in the media, culture and society.

Plot   How the story is told to the audience, i.e. the arrangement of events.

Podcast   A digital on-demand audio file of episodes or story installments that can be accessed using a digital device such as a smartphone.

Point of view (POV)   From whose perspective a story is told, and also a shot designed to appear as if it is from the viewpoint of a character.

Polysemy   Capacity of signs and symbols to have many meanings.

Portrait   A frame orientation from painting where the height is greater than the width and referred to for recent media as vertical format.

Practical effects   Physical effects performed in front of a camera, visible to a live audience without digital modification.

Presence   Sense of being there in the story. Synonymous with the term immersion.

Primary sources   Original product/experience being investigated, e.g. film, game, TV show, multiplatform production.

Pro-filmic event   Also known as the 'event as filmed', this is the recording of the real-world event.

Projection mapping   Projecting videos or images onto irregular surfaces such as buildings or cliff-faces using software to pre-distort and map the content onto the inconsistent real-world shapes and contours.

Promptography   Visual art, images or photographs generated by users giving prompts to AI.

Propp's narrative theory   Vladimir Propp identified 31 narrative functions or steps and seven character types that commonly appear in folk tales and his ideas have been taken up in analysis of various contemporary films, television programs and video games.

Protagonist   Leading character in a narrative. The term, originally associated with Greek drama, is based on the Greek *proto*, meaning first or leading, and *agonistes*, meaning one who is engaged in a struggle.

Pull (or rack) focus   Sharp focus changes from one object to another, within a single shot in order to direct audience attention to a different element in the shot.

QCAA(Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority)   Queensland statutory education body that develops syllabuses and validates senior assessment.

Reach   Raw measure of audience numbers exposed to a media product at least once. Reach metrics are used in social media and also in television.

Realism   Film style that aims to portray life as it really is and presents on screen what is supposed to be the actual experiences of the characters.

Real world   Also known as the historical world. This is actual life. Many argue that it is not possible to represent the real world because the camera is of a symbolic order.

Reflected light rays   Light bounced back off an object, determining how brightly it will 'read' on a camera.

Reflector   Any surface deliberately placed to bounce light from its source in another direction.

Register   Different range or scale that has quite different tones or qualities from others. For example, communication can be organised in different registers such as language, music or visual signage.

Regulation   Process of control or a rule set by government authorities.

Relationship line   Chain of events (sometimes secondary) in a narrative that, according to Linda Aronson, complements the action line and allows the audience to explore the emotional relationships between characters.

Release form   Used for actors, locations and images, it gives permission for the reproduction of images of such things in various media platforms.

Remediation   Process of representing the codes and conventions of one media on another to repurpose, remix or reference the original.

Representations   A media depiction that is a constructed image, but not reality itself. A representation is made up of selections and omissions made by the producers. Also a Key Concept in the FTVNM syllabus.

Resolve   To use understandings about the key concepts, and the contexts of production and use, to give technical and creative purpose and a sense of completion to a media product.

Rhythm   Sound or movement that is regularly repeated as a pattern. Also refers to the pace or 'beat' of media content, such as the rhythm of editing.

Rim light   Lighting an object from a position above and behind to define the outline from the background.

Ring light   A flattering soft light surrounding the camera lens.

Rockumentary   A documentary about rock music.

RPG (role playing game)   A game type where the user will play the game through the perspective/role of a character that may be fixed or customisable, depending on the game.

Rushes   Raw footage from the camera, pre-editing.

Saturation   Intensity of a particular colour within the light spectrum and an adjustment function.

Screen Australia   Federal government agency that supports Australian screen development, production and promotion.

Screen geography   The apparent direction and layout of forms and spaces as they appear to the audience and how characters, objects and the setting relate to each other across multiple shots.

Screen space   Actual space of the screen itself. What is presented by the camera within the field of view.

Scrim   Translucent material used to diffuse lighting.

Script   Pre-production document that specifies dialogue, action and some visual elements, according to specific discipline conventions.

Seamless   Describes classical Hollywood invisible editing – the audience is distracted from noticing cuts by changes in size, position or continuity of movement.

Second-screen television   The act of engaging with television on the main screen while holding a second screen device such as a smartphone or tablet to access other media content that might be related or on another platform.

Secondary sources   Texts written/created about, or in response to, primary sources (e.g. articles, reviews, textbooks, video essays).

Second cinema   A type of cinema including art-house, *auteur*-style and cinema made through independent means of production.

Segue   In sound editing, a smooth transition from one sequence into another. The term comes from an Italian word meaning 'to follow'.

Selection   Chosen and limited inclusion of material.

Self system   *See affective.*

Semiotics   Study of the signs and symbols of communication.

Setting   Time and place of a narrative.

Sfumato   Blending of colours and edges developed in painting that approximates a soft focus 'smokiness'.

Shallow depth of focus   The focus is not clear on the background and only the subject of the shot is fully in focus; also known as shallow depth-of-field.

Shooting ratios   Relationship between the raw amount of filming and finished screentime that can be constructed from it.

Shooting schedule   Sequence and times of filming sessions according to priorities of the production.

Shooting script   Shots listed in order of filming with details to assist the production phase, such as directorial and technical notes.

Shot   The frame revealed by the lens of a camera during the recording of a take, and the duration from one cut to another in an edited media text.

Show bible   Context and guiding scenario for a series, which evolves as episodes are added.

Showrunner   Producer, especially for episodic TV, who has overarching story universe knowledge and creative control.

Shutter speed   The amount of time the image making device is exposed to incoming light. Often digitally simulated rather than literal.

Sign   Basic unit of semiotic communication and anything that refers to something other than itself – for example a rose can signify (or be a sign for) love.

Signifier   Part of the sign that we can see (or hear, or touch); signs that may also carry connotations.

Silences   Points of view that are omitted or not heard.

Silk   Large format diffuser, often in a trampoline-style frame to cover actors in direct harsh sunlight.

Simultaneous time   The act of cross-cutting from one event to another in a different location to give the impression that the events are occurring at the same time.

Sink dolly   Bench-top camera moved past close-range objects (as in a kitchen) using only a cloth under the camera body to allow smooth movement.

Slider   Table-top dolly device for small cameras.

Social activism   Act of fighting for a change in society.

Social triangle   Triangular area of a face between the two eyes and the mouth; experiments tracking the eye contact of people in conversation have shown this region to be the main focus of eye movements.

Sound bridge   Sound used to link one scene to another. Sound can continue on into the next scene or begin before the scene has changed.

Soundscape   Sound or combination of sounds that forms an immersive environment.

Soviet montage cinema   *See collision of images.*

Soviet montage   Film editing technique based on the Marxist dialectic and developed in Soviet Russia whereby two shots are juxtaposed or 'collided' to create a third meaning not apparent in either; a specific form of montage, now commonly used in all film editing.

Spectacle   In film, generally a moment of narrative intervention, when story 'pauses' in order for the viewer to appreciate something of an aesthetic nature. How this is executed differs greatly.

Speculative fiction   Stories dealing with nonexistent content, such as the future, the fantastic, or a supernatural scenario.

Spheres of action   Roles that characters play within general areas of story action – from Vladimir Propp's Morphology of the Folk Tale.

Spun   Fibrous translucent heat-resistant material for diffusing lights at the barn doors or light body.

Stars   Performers who are featured in a range of media texts other than the original, and whose fame feeds back into further fame and future performances.

Steadicam   Operator-worn camera mount that smooths out movements by using inertia from weights, counterbalances or gyroscopes to allow the camera to 'float' on a mechanical arm.

Stereoscopic   Having the illusion of depth by creating slightly different images for each eye.

Stereotype   Oversimplified, clichéd image, repeated so many times that it establishes a pattern.

Stop-motion animation   Technique where physical manipulation of an object makes it seem that it moves on its own; often used to animate objects; shot frame by frame, with the object moved incrementally each frame. The illusion of movement is created when the frames are played back as a sequence.

Story   All of the events that happened, including those that are not depicted on screen, in contrast to the narrative (which is the overall way the story is told on screen) and plot (which is arrangement and structure of the story for the screen).

Story world   Setting, characters and plot events that form part of a larger narrative. A story world can be shared across several media platforms.

Storyboards   Sequential visual representations of edited shots and accompanying information.

Strike   Dismantle a set or camera set-up.

Stripboard   System of allocating logical grouping of scenes for filming.

Structuralist/structuralism   A philosophical approach that focuses on the underlying patterns behind culture and cultural texts.

Stunt double   Trained crew who dress to impersonate the acting talent during high-risk action scenes.

Stylistic intent   Purpose or intention driving the artist's stylistic choices.

Subjective camera angle   Framing and movement that implies the audience is witnessing from someone's viewpoint, and the camera is not a passive observer.

Subtractive lighting   Using cutters as negative bounce boards to absorb light and control modelling on the subject.

Sun-gun   A light mounted on a camera, particularly for news gathering.

Superimposition   Laying one image over another, often in post-production, so that both images are still visible.

Surrealism   An art movement that emerged in the early 20th century, focused on exploring the subconscious, dreams and irrationality of the mind through unexpected image juxtapositions.

Suspension of disbelief   Process by which audiences agree to suspend their critical faculties in order to believe in the story.

Symbolic code   System of signs that may refer to cultural meanings beyond the screen texts and create associations for the audience. Symbolic codes include costume, props, the body language of actors, objects and visual symbols.

Symbols   Signs that do not visually resemble the object or action they refer to, e.g. a dove representing peace.

Take   Version of a shot or scene produced each time it is filmed.

Take-down notice   Issued to internet service providers against material (usually online) by a copyright owner or government agencies for content that breaches Australian law.

Taxonomy   A system of classification – often arranged according to levels or layers.

Technical code   System of signs that are embedded in the text at the time of production and created using the technology of production; including shot sizes, camera angles, camera movement, framing, editing transitions, etc. A way of using production techniques from the recording and manipulating process itself that conveys meaning through repeated use.

Technologies   (Key concept) The tools and the processes used to create media products.

Technology panic   Fear that grips society when a new technology is introduced.

The Internet of Things   The networked physical objects such as fridges and baby monitors with built-in sensors that are connected to the internet allowing seamless communication that records and monitors human processes.

Thesis   An argument or viewpoint that is explained in writing and supported by evidence; central proposition or idea.

Third cinema   A type of cinema including political films of liberation from national and corporate oppression.

Third-person view   Camera or game player perspective from a detached, unseen observer.

Three-act structure   Traditional narrative structure based on the three stages of orientation, complication and resolution.

Three-column script   Pre-production plans arranged into aligned video, audio and duration, according to discipline specific convention, such as news and documentary.

Three-point lighting   Standard studio set-up of fill, key and backlight.

Tilt   Vertical pan whereby the camera pivots either up or down while mounted on a tripod.

Tilt-shift   Misaligning the lens of the camera so that it is not at the proper 90 degrees to the internal light sensor chip, resulting in only one thin slice of the picture remaining in focus. See also miniature effect.

Tone drop-out   Photographic effect of removing the number of gradations of grey tones.

'Top-down' shots   A preferred term for drone operators using extremely high-angle shots looking straight down.

Tracking shot   Film shot in which the camera is moved along the ground sideways, forward or back; originally moved along tracks.

Traditional   Long established. In relation to media, this often refers to legacy media, or to conventional production practices.

Transition   Generally used for more complex joining of shots beyond a basic cut; most carry the effective meaning of a significant change in time or location.

Transportation   Process by which a viewer becomes 'lost' in a story.

Treatment   Summary of a media production written in present tense prose with specific requirements.

Tri-dolly   Clip-on dolly castor for a tripod.

Triadic   Colour schemes using any three equally spaced colours on a colour wheel, such as the primaries.

Triangular composition   A way to compose conversation shots when there are three or more people; often used in *film noir*.

Triangulate   Principle from trigonometry allowing an unknown point to be located from exact distances to three other known points in a two-dimensional plane.

Trigger event   *See turning point.*

Troll farms   Internet workers organised and deployed to spread negative information and target individuals, often in authoritarian state-sponsored factories.

Trolling   Deliberate posting of offensive or derogatory content designed to upset others.

Trucking shot   A type of tracking shot that moves sideways and implies moving to follow an object.

Tungsten   A metal used in lighting filament that produces a warm colour temperature of 3200–3400 Kelvin.

Turning point   Point at which a decisive change occurs in the progress of the cause–effect chain of the narrative, leaving the characters with a new set of problems to solve. Turning points are usually the outcome of a climax.

Two-shot   Shot with two characters in the frame, usually a dialogue shot where both characters can be seen in conversation.

Uncanny Valley   Refers to the dip in a graph of how appealing an object is as it gets closer to human likeness. As a character is anthropomorphised it is more appealing, but when a character is almost human, audiences find the effect uncanny and the character loses its appeal.

Universal film leader   A numeric countdown to the starting frame.

Unorthodox   Opposite to what is accepted as 'normal' or traditional. In media, this means breaking accepted codes and conventions.

User experience (UX)   The experience the user has with the product and the technology.

User-generated content (UGC)   Content created and shared by users on digital platforms rather than by professional content creators.

User interface (UI)   The designated on-screen operating tools by which the user and the computer interact.

Vanishing point   In perspective images, the point on the horizon line at which parallel lines appear to converge.

Vertical format   A frame orientation where the height is greater than the width, known as portrait.

Vertical integration   Expansion of a company's investment interests into other companies whose products are either up or down the chain of production; for example, a film production company might own cinemas and also manufacture film cameras or televisions.

Video insets   A smaller moving image video shot superimposed within another video framing.

Viral   Spreading rapidly due to high levels of audience engagement.

Virtual camera   Viewpoint within artificial digital environment, or camera position that is generated from data of actual camera positions.

Virtual reality (VR)   When a person's view of the real world is replaced via headset by a simulated environment that can be photorealistic or computer generated.

Vlog   A personal social media site or channel where video logs (video blogs) are posted.

VLOS (visual line-of sight)   In relation to drones, close enough for accurate flying using the operator's naked eye.

Voice-of-God commentary   Form of narration that is common in traditional documentary. This is a voice that commentates action without being seen.

Voiceprints   Digitised aspects of speech recognisable as an individual.

Volume (audio)   The loudness of soundtrack elements.

Volume (visual)   A realistic background environment for studio filming, typically an LED display, capable of adjusting to camera positions in real time, using game graphics software.

Volumetric depth   Images that allow the viewer to move into the scene and realistically observe a 3D perspective change.

Volumetric haptics   Simulated sense of touch in the physical 3D space, such as ultrasonic effects on air.

VR 180   Virtual-reality format that provides a background in front of the view, but not behind.

Warp stabiliser   A digital filter to 'average out' camera movement to simulate a Steadicam effect.

Webisode   Episode that is part of a series distributed for online viewing as 'Web television'. The format is available for online streaming as well as downloads and may or may not have been aired in a television broadcast.

Wet weather cover   Contingency plan (usually indoors and scheduled for the end of a shoot that can be brought forward) if fine weather exterior scenes cannot be filmed.

White balance   Programming of the camera to calibrate colour according to the hue of light and ensures that white appears as natural white and other colours are rendered accordingly.

Wide shots   Sometimes used to describe extreme long shots (ELS), especially without figures; also, slightly wider than a standard long shot (LS).

Widescreen   A standard TV format using an aspect ratio of 1.78:1, known as 16×9.

Writers' room   Meetings to brainstorm story elements before scripting, especially in episodic TV.

Zeitgeist   (German - time spirit/ ghost.) Spirit, mood or mind of the times as shown in beliefs, ideas and attitudes. In media products of an era it can be reflected in types of characters, stories, gender roles or ideologies that were taken for granted at the time. Zeitgeist is often invisible to the audience of the time, but future audiences can see it clearly once values or beliefs have changed.

Zip-zoom   Very fast zoom where most of the image is blurred except for the start and finish.

Zoom shot   Shot that magnifies or enlarges its subject rather than moving closer.

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