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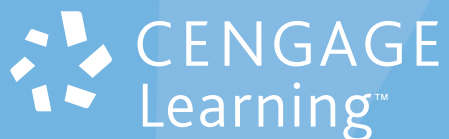
VCE

UNITS 1–4

JO FLACK

4ED





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Nelson Media VCE Units 1–4

4th Edition

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jo Flack has taught VCE Media for more than 20 years. During that time she has also worked with the VCAA in VCE curriculum development, assessment and professional learning. A passionate teacher, researcher and author, Jo has always found her greatest inspiration to be her students whose interest in Media and energetic creativity have led her on a two-decade journey of discovery that has resulted in this textbook.

Jo writes as she teaches, with a critical approach to ideas, joy and wonder. Her students say that they can hear her voice when reading her work and she hopes that students and teachers across Victoria will share her love of media as ever-inquiring consumers, creators and distributors of content. The media world is changing, it is important that students of Media share their passion and their learning. The development of 21st-century technologies will continue to fascinate, surprise and sometimes shock; it is the role of Media students to help those around them make sense of these changes. Good luck.

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Jo Flack

The **media** is ubiquitous, we cannot escape it, but why would we want to? It has been a part of our lives since before we were born. A 2008 study showed that babies could recognise the theme song of their mother's favourite soapie in the weeks after birth.

On hearing it, they stopped crying and were calm. By 2013, researchers at the University of Helsinki proved that babies recognised not only sounds but also rhythm and words in music. What did your mother listen to while pregnant with you? Are you a *Neighbours* baby or were you born a heavy metal fan?

Studying the media begins with examining our own media use. Take this survey to determine the nature and extent of your media making and consumption.



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Activity 1.1 Media use

Answer this questionnaire to determine your media history, skills and patterns of consumption, and to give your teacher some information about your skills and interests.

1 What experience have you had with the media?

- ☐ Studied it before: give details
- ☐ Worked in the media: give details
- ☐ Photography: 35 mm
- ☐ Photography: digital
- ☐ Photography: point and shoot or camera phone
- ☐ Photography: other, give details
- ☐ Publicity
- ☐ School newspaper
- ☐ Print production such as magazines or posters: give details
- ☐ Radio production
- ☐ TV production
- ☐ Digital video production
- ☐ Film/video editing





- ☐ Sound production
- ☐ Animation
- ☐ Game creation
- ☐ Internet content creation
- ☐ Social media
- ☐ Other: give details

- 2 Do you know anyone involved in the media? Who are they and what do they do?
- 3 Why did you choose to study Media this year?
- 4 Write about the media you use in your life. Include TV, films, video, streaming, downloading, radio, games, mobile phone, music, newspapers, magazines, internet, social media, photography, multimedia, etc.
- 5 Estimate how many hours of media you use per day. What does this add up to over a week?
- 6 Why do you think you use the media in the ways that you do?
- 7 What do you estimate have been the effects of the media on your life and on the lives of your friends and family?
- 8 What are your three favourite films? Why?
- 9 What, in your opinion, makes a good film or TV program?
- 10 What are your favourite TV programs? Why?
- 11 What are your favourite commercials/ad campaigns? Why?
- 12 What are your favourite internet sites, software, apps and games? Why?
- 13 If you could change the media in any way, what would you do?
- 14 Finish off with a message for your Media teacher. What does your teacher need to know about you, your passions and your ambitions to be able to teach you better?

Now compare your media use with that of your classmates:

- 1 Which media are the most popular?
- 2 Who uses the most media in a week?
- 3 Who uses the least?
- 4 Which films, TV programs and ads are the most popular?
- 5 Which are the least popular?
- 6 What patterns can you see in the media experiences and tastes of your class?
- 7 How do class members want to change the media?
- 8 Overall, what can you say about the relationship between your class and the media?
- 9 As a class, are you able to make some suggestions about things you would like to learn in VCE Media?

WHAT IS THE MEDIA?

Activity 1.1 above is designed to get you thinking about your media consumption and that of your classmates, but have you ever thought what the term ‘media’ means? When we talk of the media, we could be referring to the programs we like on television or to the internet, radio, films, newspapers or magazines. Computer games are media, as are the apps your mum uses on her phone. The term also refers to **media products**, **media texts** and the forms and platforms on which we consume and create media messages and texts. The institutions and infrastructure that create, own and distribute content and the content itself are also media. During this course you will study all of them.

Media organisations can be huge – and tiny

The term ‘media’ is used to describe some of the world’s biggest companies, such as Google or 21st Century Fox, and the products they produce, which are as diverse as Google Maps and the *Ice Age* franchise. Multinational media companies typically have many brands under their umbrella. One example is multinational company News Corp, which describes itself as a:

Global vertically integrated media company founded by Rupert Murdoch, with properties in film, television, cable, magazines, newspapers, publishing, and professional sports; chief brands include 20th Century Fox, HarperCollins, and Sky.



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<http://newscorp.com>

With a reach of over 7.2 million Australians, it is likely that you have used a News Corp Australia product already today. Check out News Corp's Wikipedia entry to see exactly what it produces and distributes.

Interestingly, you are unlikely to have seen any products from some of the largest media industries in the world. India and Nigeria each produce more feature films every year than the United States. India's 1200 annual film releases far eclipse the 800 released in the United States. Australian producers release around 35 films per year, which is a small number but fits between the United States and India in terms of films released per head of population, something we should be proud of.

Media organisations can also be very small. The Sticky Institute, a shop and resource centre devoted entirely to zines, is a volunteer-run organisation located in the Degraves Subway in Melbourne. Zine makers can create and distribute their products at the Sticky Institute. Some of these handmade products have a print run as small as one or two. Media organisations come in all sizes to match their different markets.

The media is also produced and distributed by individuals, especially since the rise of **social media**. Every time you post an image on Instagram or update your status on Facebook, you are a media creator.



The media is part of society

The media is part of our lives and culture. Since the invention of the first mass media form, the printing press, the media has influenced society – and society has influenced the media. The role and impact of the media in society and on all of us is a discourse that never ends and is conducted, ironically, mostly in the media. Some commentators see the media as a necessary evil, while for others it is a vital and vibrant part of the way we live.

A productive way of thinking about the media is to see it in the context of its place in society and culture. Figure 1.1 illustrates some of the factors that influence both individuals and the media. Can you think of any other factors contributing to the relationship between the individual and the media in society?

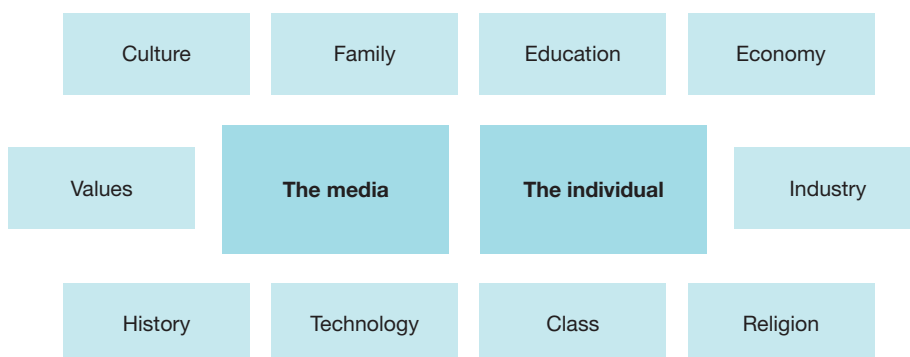


Figure 1.1 Factors that influence the relationship between the individual and the media

Media language and terminology

Like all studies, Media has its own language and terminology. Using this language makes talking about and studying the media easier because everyone shares a common understanding of the meaning of the terms we use. Media language and terminology provide a framework for creating and distributing media and for discussing how it communicates meaning using images, sound and words. This chapter outlines some of the common language and terminology. Chapter 2 covers the technical language of media production.

AUDIENCE

Audiences are central to the media. They are the reason for its existence, the source of its revenue, the market for and, increasingly, creators of its products. While this may sound self-evident, the role of audience is sometimes overlooked.

Studying the media means studying audiences – every aspect of the VCE Media course is underpinned by the consideration of audience. Questions you will ask about the media you study include:

- What is an audience?
- Why are there more than one audience?
- What is a target market or audience?
- Who are the audiences for any media product and how and when do they consume it?
- What do audiences think about the media?
- How does the media influence its audiences?
- How do audiences influence the media?
- Why do audiences choose some media forms and texts over others and what does this reveal about them and society?
- What is the nature and form of the relationships between the media and its audiences?

The answers to these questions and the many more you will ask over the next two years will reveal the social, emotional and financial world of the media, and your place in it.

Who or what is an audience?

Anyone who views, reads, listens to, uses, consumes or plays a media form or text is an audience. In any one day, you are part of many different audiences. When Media students discuss audiences, they are concerned with:

- consumption: how and why audiences watch, listen to, read, play, use and do with the media
- reception: the ways in which audiences receive, engage with and read (understand) media texts
- effects: the impact and influence media texts may have on audiences
- ratings, sales, circulation, views or clicks: the number of people in an audience and the impact of this number on the financial aspects of media production and consumption.



Figure 1.2 A crowd can be an audience or you can be an audience alone.

Media students and commentators often refer to ‘the audience’, but the idea that there is one audience for any media text is too simplistic – there are many different audiences for every media form and text. Modern media theorists do not speak of ‘the audience’ but of multiple audiences, each consuming, using and producing media texts for its own reasons. As audiences experience the media in many different ways and for different purposes they create different meanings based on their experience, needs and upbringing.

Watch your family interacting with the media over the next few days to see this idea at work. While you may all use the same social media website, for example, each family member does so for different reasons. If you all watch the same TV program, does each person 'read' it in the same way? If you share a computer, look at its recent internet history – you will be able to tell who was using the computer and what their interests and needs were from the sites they viewed.

Advertising pays for most media content. Studying ads tells us a lot about audiences because ads are targeted at different groups. Notice the ads that are in any media your family uses. Ads reveal the particular audiences the media think are consuming their products. All ads are targeted, but these days online audiences find their ads personalised because every click is tracked. You will learn more about this in Chapter 8.

Being part of an audience is something we slip in and out of – it is part of who we are but does not capture or define us or how we think.

Bernadette Casey et al., *Television Studies: The Key Concepts*, 2002

Audiences are not blank sheets of paper on which media messages can be written; members of an audience will have prior attitudes and beliefs which will determine how effective media messages are.

Nicholas Abercrombie, *Television and Society*, 1996

You are what you Tweet!

Germany Kent, *You Are What You Tweet*, 2015

What is the role of the audience?

At its most basic, the job of an audience is to consume media products. The bigger the audience, the more powerful and wealthy the media becomes. Audiences pay for the media by buying, hiring or subscribing to media products and by using media products and platforms where they are exposed to advertising. Media products are expensive to produce. It is always worth considering where the money comes from.

As well as consuming media, the audience also has a powerful role in determining the types of media that is produced through the choices they make when selecting media to use or consume. Television ratings, newspaper circulation and cinema audience numbers are examples of audience power. The greater the audience, the more likely the media is to produce products with similar layouts or storylines, or in similar genres. It is also why we see the same actors again and again. Producers know that some actors attract audiences better than others. You may not feel powerful when you click on a YouTube video or buy a cinema ticket, but you are playing your part in determining what texts the media will produce next.

Why are there different audiences?

Everyone brings their own life experiences, **values** and understanding to the way they engage with media texts. This means that all texts are read and interpreted slightly differently. Take the debate about reality media as an example. Some audiences love it, others hate it, but one thing is certain – these differences of opinion exist because we all understand media texts in different ways.

It used to be thought that audiences were directly influenced by media messages, but if this were true then everyone would do and think exactly what the media tells them. This theory – the **hypodermic or bullet theory** – suggests that audiences are passive consumers with no thoughts of their own about what they are consuming. It is an overly simplistic way of thinking about the media. Certainly the media is a powerful influence on our lives, but no consumer would do everything the media suggests. After all, everyone watches the ads, but not everyone drinks Coca-Cola.

The media does not shoot messages directly into our brains; instead, we filter these messages through a number of social and psychological 'screens', each of which influences the way we read media products. Media audiences actively construct meaning when consuming the media, using an ever-changing range of factors to determine its meaning and whether they enjoy it. For more on media influence and audience agency, see Chapter 13.

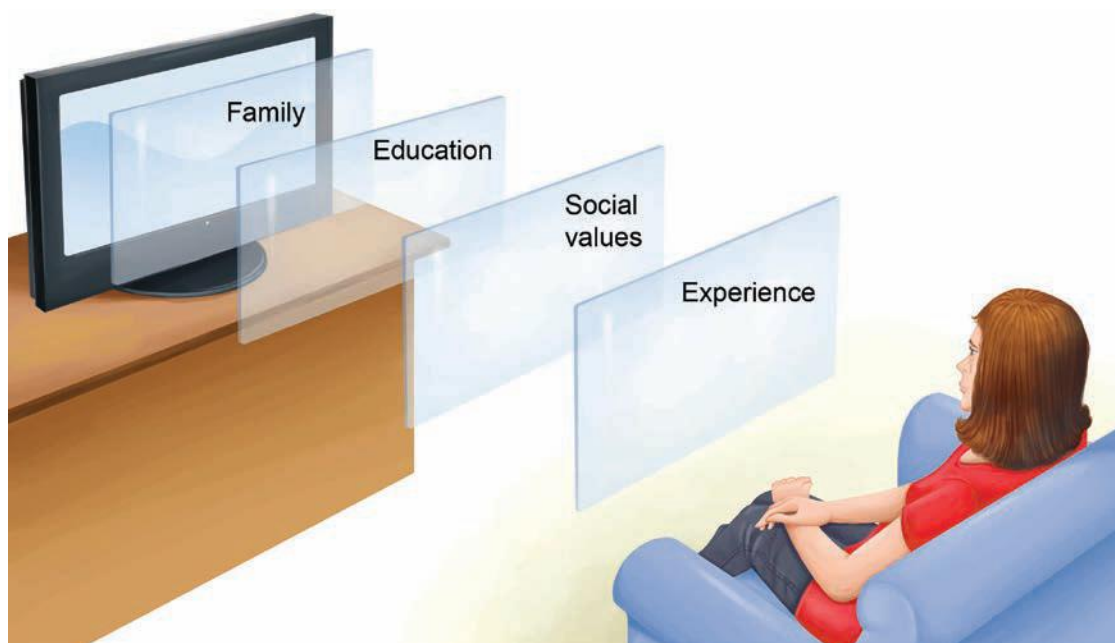


Figure 1.3 Think of some more screens that filter your understanding of media texts.

Audiences are getting larger and smaller at the same time

Before the internet, most media was made for a large audience; hence the term ‘mass media’. Today, in what commentators are calling a post-broadcast media environment, mass media industries such as newspapers, film and television continue to engage audiences, but the advent of digital media, and particularly the internet, has created a huge change in how we think about audiences.

Most media products are still created for a mass audience. People go to the cinema, read newspapers and watch television as they always have, but how they watch and read is changing. Technologies such as the internet, streaming video and podcasting mean media products can attract increasingly larger audiences across the world, but these audiences may be alone while reading the *New*

York Times online or streaming *Stranger Things*, or they may watch *Star Wars* in a digital cinema of 45 seats instead of a huge megaplex cinema that seats a thousand. The audience is still a mass audience, but they often consume texts as individuals rather than in a group.

Another significant change for audiences is that now anyone can create and share media. Once content had to be commercially viable before it could be produced and distributed. Today, anyone with a smartphone is able to make media products and communicate with audiences large and small through the internet. Friends, family, interest groups and fans create and share media online. Some of this content is consumed by huge audiences of millions, some of it by just a few.

Audiences are consuming media in different ways

For most of the **broadcast** era, media audiences consumed products in groups. If you wanted to see a film, you went to the cinema. To listen to the radio or, later, watch TV, families would sit together in their lounge room. Media devices were expensive, but as technology became cheaper, families could afford more devices. Today, mass media audiences may comprise millions of people consuming media texts such as films and streamed TV in much smaller groups or alone on their own device. The consumption of media has diversified. What do you think this means for the ways audiences read media texts?





Media audiences are characterised not only by their numbers but also by their membership or affiliation with others who may be linked by factors including gender, race, demographic, education, age, taste, experience and so on. Each factor has an impact on the way audiences read and create texts.

Their orientation and degree of attention to a text is also an important aspect of audience study. Are the audience paying close attention? Are they snuggling in the back row of the cinema, or at a sleepover with a group of friends? Perhaps they are a reluctant audience trapped in front of an educational video. The **reception context** of media consumption is important when analysing how audiences experience and engage with a media text.

Activity 1.2 How many audiences are you a member of?

Create a list of all the different media forms you use. Make a note of the different ways you use each media form and the types or groups of people who are also an audience for this media form. How many audiences are you a member of?

AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT

For media creators, audience engagement is their one and only goal. Audience engagement sells products, texts and advertising, it creates buzz, it builds circulation or ratings figures and it means success.

Media students have a particular meaning in mind when they speak of engagement. For us, it is not only that an audience member consumed a text but, more importantly, how and why they consumed it, and the effect it had on the audience.

For an audience to engage with a text may mean that they loved it, but it may mean that they hated it, or were bored or learnt something or decided to share it with their followers. Audience engagement takes many forms. The question Media students ask is why? What are qualities of engagement and why?

Active and passive audiences

Early theories about the media characterised audiences as passive receivers of media messages. These theories described the relationship between the media and its audience as one where the media was powerful and the audience unquestioningly received whatever media messages came its way.

Audiences relaxing on the couch consuming media were said to be passive, their behaviour mistakenly taken as an indicator of acceptance of the media message. Although logically we know that this is not true, just because audiences are consuming media does not mean that they agree with its message, the idea of a passive audience continues to exist in our daily lives. How many times have you been accused of vegging out in front of the box or wasting time flicking through your social media feed? You might have been vegging out, but you certainly weren't passive. The fact



Figure 1.4 Not a passive audience, despite looking like one

is, there is no such thing as a passive audience. Even audiences who are not paying attention to a text are not passive about it – they are choosing not to pay attention.

Today we think of all audiences as active in their media use. While the community holds the view that some audiences are more susceptible to media influence than others, none are passive. Yes, audiences are influenced by the media, but that doesn't mean that they are not active in making meanings of their media texts. The relationship between the media and its audiences is not that simple. Audiences have **agency**, the power to make choices about their engagement with the media.

READING THE MEDIA

Media students use many terms to describe the ways they use the media. They may speak of watching, listening, looking, gaming, playing, surfing or reading (as in reading a magazine). More commonly, Media students use the term **reading** to mean all the different ways in which they interact with a text.

Reading a text means more than just consuming; reading implies the process of both consuming and making meaning of (understanding) a text. Media students speak of 'reading a film' or 'reading *Westworld*' or 'making a reading' of a web page or a video clip.

Media producers create products with meanings encoded into them that audiences read and decode. Because not all audiences come from the same social background or share the same experiences, they do not all read texts in the same way. British media theorist Stuart Hall described an important theory about how audiences approach media texts in his paper 'Encoding/Decoding' (1980), in which he classified audience readings as preferred, negotiated or oppositional:

- **Preferred readings** are those intended by the producers of a text; they reflect the dominant ideology underpinning the text.
- **Negotiated readings** are those where in making meaning of a media product the audience is influenced by social and/or political factors; the reading is a compromise between these influences and the preferred reading of the creators.
- **Oppositional readings** are those created by an audience whose social and/or political position puts them in conflict with the preferred and/or dominant reading of a text.

Audiences, of course, do not think about this when consuming media. Everyone makes judgements about the meaning and value of texts subconsciously, usually based on a gut feeling. Readings often change as the text progresses. Hall recognised the limitations of his classification system, but saw it as a useful tool for illustrating how audiences make meanings of texts. The encoding/decoding model effectively reveals why the hypodermic theory fails as an explanation of audience behaviour.

Activity 1.3 Reading media texts

Find a TV text that is controversial because some audiences love it and others would never watch it, such as *The Bachelor* or *Family Feud*. Interview audience members from both groups to find out what they think of the text and why. Which types of readings do audiences demonstrate in the interview?

Context is everything in media

Media products are produced for different audiences and purposes, at different times and in different places, each with its own diverse culture. They are consumed by the audiences they have been created for and by other audiences that may interpret them entirely differently from the meaning that was intended. When studying media, students need to be aware of the contexts of:

- **Production:** who created the text, where and why? What was happening at the time? How was the production financed?
- **Distribution:** who is selling, screening or sharing the text? Why? What do they have to gain from distributing the text? What is happening in the market in which the text is distributed?
- **Consumption:** who is watching, listening to, playing or reading the text and why? What is happening around them that might impact on their understanding of the text?
- **Interpretation:** how and why do different audiences make meaning from a text?

Understanding the contexts in which media texts are produced, distributed, consumed and interpreted can be as simple as knowing that pre-teen viewers of *The Bachelor* may read representations in the text in a very different way from older viewers because they have not yet had the



Newspix/Adam Taylor

A man and a woman are shown from the waist up, smiling and embracing each other. The man, on the left, is wearing a white t-shirt and has his arm around the woman's shoulder. The woman, on the right, is wearing a dark green off-the-shoulder top and is holding a single red rose, which she is smelling. They are both looking at each other with affection. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Figure 1.5 Some texts are controversial because audiences read them differently.

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- Figure 1.5** Some texts are controversial because audiences read them differently.

Figure 1.5 Some texts are controversial because audiences read them differently.



Figure 1.5 Some texts are controversial because audiences read them differently.

That was then ...

In the 1960s, a new discipline called media studies was introduced in universities. In those days, a mass audience was the prerequisite for any form of communication to be defined as media. Students studied classic movies and debated whether or not the telephone qualified as a media form because it only enabled two people to communicate at the one time. Times have changed!

Prophetically, early media academic Marshall McLuhan wrote at the time: 'The medium is the message'. What do you think McLuhan meant by this? Write your answer in your workbook. Come back to this statement and your answer at the end of each unit, and answer the question again. By recording your answers, you will be able to track your developing understanding of the media.

Activity 1.4 Classifying media forms and platforms

Use one of the free online infographic makers to create an infographic that illustrates one or more of the media classification systems described on the previous page.

HUMANS ARE STORYTELLING ANIMALS

Everyone loves a good story. Stories are one of the primary ways humans construct meaning. Whether it is a chat with our mates, a feature film, a nature documentary, a football match, a hashtagged Instagram image, a news article or an online thread, we all make sense of our lives through stories. Story is at the heart of our lives and the media. In the media, stories are constructed through an interconnected series of images, sounds or words. There are an endless number of ways to tell a story. Let's try some.

Activity 1.5 Boy meets girl

Here is a classic storyline:

Boy meets girl, something challenging happens, boy and girl overcome difficulty and fall in love.

In small groups, choose one of the media options below and design a media product based on this storyline:

- television news item
- newspaper article
- Snapchat story
- Facebook feed
- series of Instagram posts
- podcast.

Share your designs with your classmates.

Narratives are systems of meaning

Media stories, whether fictional or non-fictional, are systems of meaning structured as **narratives**. The best way to think of the difference between a story and a narrative is to imagine a story as everything in a series of connected events, including those that are inferred, presented in the order in which they occurred, while a narrative is the result of the selection, sequencing and construction of the relevant events from a story that communicates meaning. The illustration on page 251 illustrates the difference.

Media creators structure stories into narratives through the manipulation of codes and conventions such as plot, camera, editing and sound in film or the layout of a page or photographs in print, photographic exhibitions or web pages. In a narrative we only see those aspects of a story that are relevant to constructing meaning. Thus we never see Batman making his bed or the process of shooting a #bestgelatoever Instagram image; these events are simply not relevant to the narratives they are part of.

As we have seen already in this chapter, audiences play a role in the construction of narrative meaning through the ways they consume and read them. In most products meaning is shared between producer and audiences through a common understanding of media codes and conventions. Occasionally productions are designed to allow each audience member to construct an original and individual narrative from the information they see, hear and/or read. These productions are often constructed in experimental forms or use **codes** and **conventions** in ambiguous ways.

Systems of meaning in vampire texts

Vampire films are more or less based on the storyline and themes established in Bram Stoker's 1897 gothic novel *Dracula*. Texts in this genre use a particular set of technical and symbolic codes and conventions to develop the narrative, each building on what has come before while adding complexity in order to engage an audience that is already familiar with the story and the codes and conventions used in this genre.

Each iteration of the vampire story explores themes that are current at the time of its production. The original book and the first film, *Nosferatu* (1922), drew on long-established myths and stories in which the danger of sexuality is represented through the penetration of the vampire's fangs. The contagion is spread as rats spread disease through the city.

In later films, the contagion came to represent everything from the spread of youth culture, as in Joel Schumacher's *The Lost Boys* (1987), to homosexuality and HIV in *Interview with the Vampire* (1994), directed by Neil Jordan, disaffected youth in *Twilight* (2008), directed by Catherine Hardwicke, and crime in *From Dusk till Dawn* (2014), created by Robert Rodriguez. What issues do you think the next vampire film will represent?



Figure 1.7 *Nosferatu* (1922), directed by FW Murnau

MEDIA CODES AND CONVENTIONS

The media constructs texts using a system of codes and conventions that, when used together, suggest meaning. Knowledge of these codes and conventions is commonly understood by media creators and their audiences.

Media codes

Media codes are the technical, written and symbolic tools used to construct media products. Technical codes refer to the construction of vision, sound and text. Symbolic codes are the ways image, sound and vision can be used to suggest meaning.

Listed below are the common elements of media codes. When you start looking, you will notice many more.

- Camera – angle, shot size, movement
- Lighting – naturalistic, expressive, high-key, low-key
- Sound – dialogue, music, sound effects, pitch, tone, timbre, volume
- Editing – selection and cutting of images, vision and sound
- Mise en scène – placement of everything in a film frame, such as actors, set design and props
- Setting – the location of a text or scene
- Visual composition – the arrangement of elements in an image or on a page
- Typography – selection and use of fonts
- Colour – hue, saturation and value (brightness)
- Text – words
- Acting – use of body, gesture, facial expressions and voice
- Graphic elements and symbols

To see media codes at work, look at the images on the right. The text is the same in each, but the use of typography suggests different meanings. What do you think each suggests?



Figure 1.8 Knowledge of media codes is shared between the media and its audiences.

Typography:

The art and technique of arranging type to make written language legible, readable and appealing when displayed.

The selection and arrangement of typefaces are media codes used to suggest meaning to readers.

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The selection and arrangement of typefaces are media codes used to suggest meaning to readers.

Media conventions

All media texts are constructed using conventions that are appropriate to their form. Television programs have title and credits sequences; sitcoms resolve their plotlines at the end of each episode; magazine covers are structured with a masthead (title), image and cover lines; ads finish with the company logo;

websites use hyperlinks for navigation; and this book uses the conventions of textbooks by interspersing information and activities with images designed to engage you.

Media conventions are the generally accepted ways of constructing form and meaning in texts. They include story principles, such as story and character arcs, generic elements, cause and effect, point of view, the structuring of time, title and credits sequences, elements of page layout, hyperlinks, paper stock and mounting or framing images for presentation. For more on media codes and conventions, see Chapter 3.

Codes and conventions work with each other to construct meaning

Some codes and conventions relate the storytelling aspects of a text – they are about the message. Other codes and conventions are related to the technical aspects of media production. Media messages are constructed from a combination of both, but the audience decides what the message means. There are many factors that influence their decision.

The table below presents these codes and conventions. You already know many of them; others you will learn about as you progress through VCE Media. Although the table is comprehensive, the lists of codes and conventions are far from complete; there are many codes and conventions. Think of the table as a series of headings to begin your investigation of how meaning is constructed in media products. Read the table like an equation:

$$\text{story} + \text{production} + \text{audience} = \text{meaning}$$

Codes and conventions related to story	+	Codes and conventions related to production	+	Factors that impact on audience readings
Setting: - the location of a text, scene or image Period in which the text is set Story principles, forms and structures, including: Organisation of plot : narrative possibilities - opening, development and resolution - narrative arcs multiple storylines Characters : - establishment, development, motivation and relationships between - character arcs Structuring of time: - temporal order, duration, frequency - contraction and expansion - linear and/or non-linear Cause and effect Point(s) of view Genre and/or style Referencing of media, art and literature forms, styles, texts or stories		Camera techniques: shot selection, angle, focus, depth of field, movement Impact of technologies on production: - film, video, lenses, paper stock, software and printers Lighting : - naturalistic, expressive, high-key, low-key, gels Sound : - dialogue, music, sound effects, editing - diegetic and/or non-diegetic Mise en scène: - set design, blocking of actors, costume, make-up, props Acting : - use of body, gesture, facial expressions and voice Editing : - selection and cutting of vision and sound, images or effects, colour grading - special effects, graphic elements - title and credits sequences Typography and text: - selection and use of fonts and words Art elements and design principles (see page 38) Page, image or screen layout Site sequencing and hyperlinking Mounting and framing of images		Expectation and reading of texts include: - advertising - reviews - word of mouth Experience and knowledge of: - media form - genre and/or style - story - director - actors - production values Contexts: - time and place of a text's creation, distribution and consumption - impact of reception context - engagement - intellectual, personal or emotional connection - institutional and financial factors influencing the creation and distribution of the text - social, cultural and historical aspects of the time and place of production and/or consumption - impact of narrative organisation on readings

MEDIA TEXTS AND PRODUCTS

The terms 'media text' and 'media product' are used to describe media content we consume. Often these terms are used interchangeably, but they can also be useful when talking about different types of media content. A media text is perhaps the simplest of all media concepts to understand. A text is one media product – your school website, for example, or *The Project* or the *Herald Sun* newspaper. This term originated in the early days of media studies, when defining media texts was easy – a film was a film and an ad was an ad – but today, texts increasingly converge or cross media forms.

The term 'media product' can be used for a single media text such as *Call of Duty* or a collection of texts such as the *The Block* franchise, which includes the TV program, website and merchandise. Product is also a useful term to describe media content that is created collaboratively, such as a Facebook group or an Instagram feed.



NewsPix/David Caird

Figure 1.9 *The Block* is a media text and also a collection of media products.

Text types

Media students use the term 'text types' to describe similar texts within media forms. They may speak of film text types, such as feature films, documentaries or shorts. TV programs can be categorised into text types such as news, current affairs, soaps, drama, sitcoms and reality TV. Newspapers may be categorised as broadsheet, tabloid or online. Photography is created for different purposes, such as advertising, news, illustration or fine art. Each is a different type of text. Confused? Don't be. The bottom line is that all this definition and categorisation simply helps everyone have a common language and understanding around the media topic under discussion.

Genre and style

Genre is a method of grouping texts according to the technical and symbolic codes and conventions they have in common. These may include storylines, setting, character types, topics and themes.

Genre is another way of categorising texts. Films may be, for example, science fiction, Westerns or romantic comedies. Television shares some genres with film, but also has some of its own; for example, dramas can have supernatural themes, such as *Doctor Who*, or they may be police procedural dramas, such as *CSI*. Video games are categorised by genre, such as first-person shooter, arcade, role playing, strategy or sport. Like all media texts, games can and frequently do cross or mix genres.

Genre also refers to specific characteristics of a text type. These include genre-specific codes and conventions that structure plot patterns, character traits, themes and production techniques. Audience expectation is an important aspect of genre. When we watch a musical, we understand that we will see singing and dancing – what else could there be! Similarly, the aim of a thriller is to keep the audience in suspense until the climax.

Genre texts develop out of the traditions of the genre from which they spring. Thus they become more sophisticated as both directors and the audience increasingly understand the characteristics of the genre and the codes and conventions of construction, sharing the tropes and jokes. For more on genre, see page 258.

Activity 1.6 Genre fun

The great thing about genre is that you already know so much about it. Let's put your knowledge to the test.

- 1 Choose your favourite film or game genre.
- 2 Write down all the 'rules' for this genre. Genre rules are the codes and conventions that cover every aspect of a text in a particular genre, from storyline to the use of symbolic elements and production techniques.
- 3 Create a poster or multimedia presentation that illustrates the codes and conventions that govern your favourite genre.

MEDIA INDUSTRIES

‘Media industries’ is the term used to describe the collection of businesses and organisations that use technology to deliver media content to audiences. Media industries are generally specific to a media form, such as films, television, radio, telecommunications, the internet, video games, newspapers, magazines and music. The term also refers to smaller subsets of industries, such as the recording industry, internet service providers or professional photographers.

Some media industries cross media platforms. These include advertising, public relations, journalism and marketing.



Getty Images/WILLIAM WEST/AFP

Media institutions

Media institutions are organisations that create and distribute media, and also those that regulate media. These include production companies, television or radio companies, distributors or corporations that work across media forms, such as News Corp and 21st Century Fox. Companies that provide online spaces for individuals to create and distribute media, such as Facebook and Google, are also media institutions.

Most media institutions, such as Network Ten and FremantleMedia, are commercial. Others are government organisations, such as the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and SBS.

Media regulation

Media regulators are a set of media institutions whose job it is to manage or control media industries, institutions or content. In Australia, the federal government, through the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), regulates media ownership, broadcast media, the internet and telecommunications. It also regulates the amount of Australian content shown on broadcast media. Another government regulator, the Classification Board, is responsible for managing the content of all films, video games and some literature distributed in Australia. It also provides ratings advice to consumers.

Commercial media industries and institutions in Australia use a system of industry self-regulation. There is a self-regulatory organisation for each media industry. These include the Press Council for newspapers, Free TV and the Australian Subscription Television and Radio Association (ASTRA) for television, the Australian Association of National Advertisers and the Advertising Standards Bureau for advertising, and the Communications Alliance for the internet and mobile phones. Self-regulatory organisations work under industry codes of practice that spell out what is acceptable in terms of media content and how organisations for which they are responsible should operate.

Codes of practice that guide media content include the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA) Journalist Code of Ethics, the Commercial Television Industry Code of Practice, the Code of Advertising and Marketing to Children and the Environmental Claims Code.



Weblink

Activity 1.7 How much media is out there?

Try some or all of these:

- 1 Do a Google search for the words 'media text'. How many responses do you get? Each of these websites is a media text in itself.
- 2 Take one day's TV guide and count how many different programs are broadcast in your area. Surprised? Now multiply that by seven!
- 3 Go to the Internet Movie Database and see how many films were released in the year you were born. What about the year your father was born? What about last year? What does this tell you about the number of feature films that have been made since records were first kept in 1891?
- 4 Find out how many episodes of your favourite TV program have been produced.
- 5 How many horror films have been made? How many have you seen?
- 6 How many community radio stations broadcast in Australia? Find out at the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia website.
- 7 Between 6 p.m. and midnight, a TV station may schedule up to 13 minutes per hour of 'non-program' material (mostly ads). Each one is 15, 30 or 60 seconds in length. How many ads do you consume every week? What about ads online?
- 8 Estimate the total length of all the recorded music on your devices or in your collection. How long could you listen without repeating a song?
- 9 How many magazines and newspapers does your family read every month?
- 10 How many apps do you and your family have on your phones? How much time per day do you spend using these apps?

Now some comparisons:

- 1 Estimate the number of hours you devoted to school and homework in an average week last year.
- 2 Think back over the past 24 hours. How much time was spent not consuming any media at all? Remember to take into account incidental media consumption, such as hearing the TV in another room and passing advertising posters in the street.
- 3 When was the last time you can remember that you didn't listen to any music for a whole day?
- 4 List all the ads that drive you crazy.
- 5 Tell the person next to you about the best film you ever saw.
- 6 Explain the purpose and advantages of the phone app you find most useful to a classmate.
- 7 Think about the last time something in the media made you smile.

Overwhelmed? You shouldn't be. The media is everywhere and is impossible to escape, but why would you want to when it can offer so much?



Weblink

Media industry processes

One of the difficulties when trying to label the media is deciding whether something is a media form or a **media process**. Increasingly, these two categories are converging, and for most purposes it doesn't really matter. But what is a media process?

Media processes are the systems involved in creating or communicating information or ideas. They usually involve a range of steps and more than one media form. In media, we speak of 'processing a film', the 'video production process' or the '**digitisation** process'. We might also refer to communicating via the internet as a process.

The advertising process is a good example of how the media uses a range of forms and texts to communicate information. Here is how it works:

- A company produces a product – bottled water, for example. To sell the water, the company must market it, and for this they need ads. The water-bottling company employs an advertising agency to create an advertising campaign and to purchase time and space in media outlets, such as TV stations, billboards, magazines and online. The advertising agency in turn conducts market research to determine consumer opinion, and then designs a campaign to address a perceived market niche.
- The next stage of the process sees the advertising agency employ a production company to produce the ads. This will involve another range of media professionals, including a pre-production team, a video production team, stylists, photographers, graphic artists, editors and musicians.
- Finally, the ads are distributed and broadcast. With a bit of luck, the sales of this brand of water will increase and the cost of production and marketing will be covered. And you thought the price of bottled water was too high!



Shutterstock.com/Coprid

If you would like to try your hand at marketing water, see Activity 4.20 on page 108. Perhaps you can create a strategy that is cooler than 'Thankyou Water', which has its own Instagram and Facebook pages.

Activity 1.8 Media processes unpacked

Choose a media process from the list below and research how many different stages, media forms and texts are involved:

- radio news broadcasting
- TV current affairs
- a promotional web page
- a music video clip
- film merchandising
- a government health advertising campaign.

Create an illustrated report that demonstrates the process you have researched.

Audience? Student? Fan? Researcher? Which is it to be?

One of the issues that Media students experience is recognising and negotiating the boundaries they are required to cross on a daily basis. The media is fun, which is why you chose this subject. Sometimes, however, it is difficult to know whether you are a fan or a researcher. Are you both? It can be difficult to negotiate the shifting sands of taste and cold, hard criticism. You are an audience, yet at times you are required to differentiate yourself from that audience. On these occasions, it is important to try to step outside your taste and comfort zone, and look objectively at the media you are studying. On other occasions, your personal reaction is the most valuable research tool available.

There is no easy answer to this perennial dilemma. Over time, you will find a path that will allow you to slip between the roles required of you and still retain your love of the media. Good luck.

WHAT IS CULTURE?

Culture is all those things that society uses to express itself. This includes language, music, media, art, literature and dance. We use cultural forms to learn about, understand and live in the world. British academic Raymond Williams described culture as 'the whole way of life'. Culture refers to the arts and also the values, norms and symbolic elements of our lives. Through our culture we construct and share meaning. The codes and conventions that are used to produce and read media texts are part of our culture.

Popular culture can tell us a lot about a society, about its history, its tastes, and its values. Turn on talkback radio or read the letters in any newspaper and it's clear that popular culture and media generates a lot of debate.

Professor Catharine Lumby, Macquarie University

Popular culture

The study of popular culture is important to media. The term 'popular culture' means those aspects of the media and cultural practices that are widely disseminated and enjoyed within society. It includes, but is not limited to media products, popular theatre, music, fashion, entertainment, pastimes, tastes and sport. Popular culture may also be referred to as 'low culture', and is often discussed in contrast to 'high culture', which are forms of culture such as literature, classical music and fine art that are enjoyed by smaller audiences.

VCE Media is mainly concerned with the ways in which media, society and other aspects of popular culture interact with each other. For example, Media students may study the relationship between sport and the media where the industry has influenced changes in the way that some sports, such as football and cricket are played and how sporting clubs raise money. Professional sport is now played

during peak viewing times to maximise advertising revenue. Players wear sponsors' logos, which in turn have become fashion statements for those fans who buy club clothing and memorabilia.

The study of popular culture involves looking at cultural aesthetics and the context in which popular culture is created, distributed and consumed. It examines the relationship between audiences and the business of media. Popular culture is also studied in terms of its relationship with high culture. This aspect of media is exciting and often controversial, as you will discover when you delve into some of the debates that are at the centre of our media experiences. What are the cultural forces that determine popularity? Why are some programs considered 'good' while others are 'trash TV'? What makes *Game of Thrones* so popular, while ABC radio series *Ockham's Razor* is enjoyed by a much smaller audience? Why do some people think that one is better than the other?

The influence of different cultures and our own history is an important part of popular culture, and by studying influences such as these we can answer questions such as: Why has anime become popular in recent years? How can a modern audience relate to Shakespeare when it's produced by Baz Luhrmann, but not when it's put on by a local theatre company? What is the relationship between hip hop and Bach? Popular culture is integral to many areas of study in Media and will thread itself through most units.



Getty Images/Quinn Rooney

The media, society and culture

The media is a ready scapegoat for a range of social ills. Overweight? Junk food ads made you eat too much! Anorexic? Pro-ana sites created your debilitating low self-esteem! Angry after the movies? It's got to be the violence! Feeling slothful? The TV made you into a couch potato!

Students in cultural and media studies are getting analytic tools that will help them grapple with the world around them ... Many of them are also getting professional media production and communication skills that are now in demand in jobs across the board.

Professor Catharine Lumby, Macquarie University

Audiences like their answers to big issues in readily digestible sound bites. Our lives are busy and there is so much information to take in, who can blame us? However, the media's ability to simplify complex issues is both its greatest strength and its greatest weakness.

It takes only a few moments to realise that blaming the media for all our social problems is simplistic and wrong. Certainly there is much to criticise in the media, but there is also much to celebrate. Over the next two years, you will often find yourself at the centre of this conflict. Is the media evil? Yes! Is it wonderful? Absolutely! And what is really fascinating is that it can often be disgraceful and sublime at the same time.

Everybody has an ambivalent relationship with the media – we all enjoy it a lot and fear it a little. Worrying about the media is not going to change this. Learning about it will. Rather than wasting valuable energy defending the indefensible, this subject is designed to equip you with the knowledge and skills you need to use the media effectively to pursue further study or a career in the media and, above all, to participate fully in contemporary society.



In a Complicated Relationship
with the media

Figure 1.10 We are all in a complicated relationship with the media.

Television is basically teaching whether you want it to or not.

Jim Henson, creator of *The Muppets*

Activity 1.9 Growing up square-eyed

Draw a timeline of your life and place all your significant media memories on it. Perhaps you remember your first trip to the cinema, the time you got scared watching movies at a sleepover, or your first MA 15+ film. Perhaps falling asleep watching educational videos in science, reading your first *Total Girl* magazine or getting your first phone was a significant media event in your life. Jot them all down.

Compare your timeline with those of your classmates. What are the similarities and differences? Why do you remember these events? What do the events reveal about young people and the media today?

MEDIA ANALYSIS

During this study, you will be consuming, reading and analysing many media texts. It helps to develop a methodology for your analyses. This will help you not only understand the media you are studying but, just as importantly, be able to explain your reading of texts to others.

To analyse media texts, we often deconstruct or break them down to work out how they are created, what they mean, who the audience is and the effect of the text on that audience.

There is a simple and systematic way to do this that works for any type of text in any media form, whether it is visual, moving, aural and/or written.

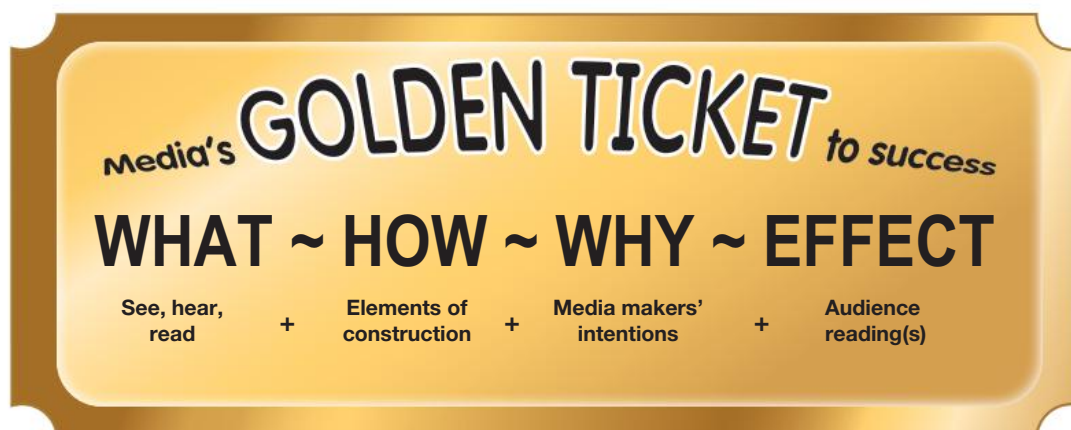
Ask yourself the following questions:

- Who is the audience? (intended, current, possible audiences)
- What does the audience see, hear and read? (image, sound, text)
- How is the text constructed? (technical and symbolic codes and conventions used to construct each element)
- Why has the creator of the text structured it in this way?
- What was the media creator trying to say?
- How does the audience read the text?
- What is the impact of the contexts of construction, distribution and consumption on audience readings?

Deconstructing texts

← Audience →				
Who	What	How	Why	Effect
is the intended audience?	do audiences see?	are the elements constructed?	did the creator structure the element/text this way?	on preferred, oppositional or negotiated readings of the text?
is the current audience?	do audiences hear?	do the elements suggest meaning?		
are possible audiences?	do audiences read?			of contexts of construction, distribution and consumption on readings of the text?

And just in case you need to take your analysis skills with you, here it is in photocopiable form. It is called 'Media's Golden Ticket to Success'. You're welcome.



Activity 1.10 Media goals, learning and achievement

VCE Media is great fun and the learning often seems effortless. Therefore, to make the most of each area of study, it is a good idea to set learning goals and record your achievements.

At the beginning of every semester, read through the course outline and note some personal goals for the unit. These may include:

- goals related to technology
- goals related to theoretical areas of study
- goals related to your approach to learning, in class and at home
- goals related to developing your skills in making media.

At the end of each lesson, briefly note what it is that you have achieved and learnt. Set yourself some further goals for home study to reinforce this learning.

At the conclusion of each area of study, review your goals and set some new ones for the next area. By the end of each unit, you will have a complete record of your developing skills and knowledge. This will help you prepare for tests, assessment tasks and exams, and also when you prepare your CV or folio for course selection, especially if you are looking for work in the media industry.



MAKING MEDIA

VCE Media offers many opportunities to develop skills and make products in a variety of media forms:

- moving image – for example, film, television, video, animation
- still image – for example, photography
- audio – for example, radio, podcast
- print – for example, magazine, zine, comic, graphic novel, newspaper, poster
- digital/online – for example, online video and audio, streaming video and audio, podcast, magazine, comic, graphic novel, newspaper, video game, blog, website, app
- convergent or hybridised media – the combination, joining or evolution of two or more media forms.

Your school may specialise in one media form or it may offer many. Over the course of the four units, you will have the opportunity to work in and compare a range of forms and technologies.

In Units 1 and 2, many practical tasks spring from the theoretical aspects of the course. They provide a chance to try to test the ideas and approaches you have learnt about for these outcomes and to produce works in more than one media form. Some tasks will be exercises that represent your understanding of concepts or technologies. Other practical tasks will encompass fully developed productions, complete in their own right. These activities will give you the opportunity to compare media forms and to demonstrate your developing creativity. You will build an increasing range of technical skills with which to impress your audiences.

In Units 3 and 4, you will investigate media forms, texts and audience engagement while developing production skills in the media form in which you choose to work. You will then design and produce a media production for a designated audience.

This chapter is all about the processes and skills required for media design and production. You can use these in any practical tasks, exercises and productions throughout your VCE. Let's get started.

Time-based and object-based media technologies

Some media forms are time-based, while others are object-based. The codes and conventions used to construct them are different, as is how they are read by audiences.

Intangible or time-based media, such as film, video, sound and music, control how much time the audience spends consuming them. The creator manages how and when the stories, representations or information are revealed.

Tangible or object-based media, such as photography, print and static web productions, are consumed by audiences as they wish. They may skim quickly over the product or spend hours engaging with it. They are designed to grab and hold attention, engaging and rewarding audiences for their time by revealing added detail or layers of meaning.

Interactive media products may be either time-based or object-based or contain elements of both.

Media design principles and processes

Professional media productions are complex operations with casts and crew that could be in the thousands. *Iron Man 3* credited 3310 crew! Network Seven coverage of the Rio Olympic Games only had 450 crew members, but they drew on over 1000 camera feeds to put the event to air.

In these major productions, teams of specialists work in their area of expertise, rarely if ever meeting other practitioners working over the three production stages, pre-production, production and post-production.

At the other end of the professional scale, an Australian feature film such as *Last Train to Freo* (2006) had a cast of eight and a crew of 38. The film was described as a tight drama, not just because it is entirely set in one train carriage. Naturally, at this scale the production process is very different from that of a Hollywood blockbuster.

Of course, many indie media producers work with a very small crew. In the case of online producers such as YouTubers, the cast and crew could be just one.

In professional media productions, everyone knows exactly what is required of them and the time they have to complete their allotted tasks. It is exactly the same for student productions. And it is all about planning and process.

Equipment

There is not a media professional or student alive who ever believes that they have enough equipment. It's true. Ask your teacher, who will undoubtedly be a gear freak. However, it is a myth that you need all the latest equipment to make the best media products (although some new equipment is always nice). The trick is not racing from camera to camera, or desperately searching for the latest software. The trick is to use the equipment available to you to the max.

Learn what your camera can and can't do, and then you will find yourself pushing the boundaries. The temptation to upgrade to the latest technology can be almost overwhelming, but how many features do you regularly use on the technology you already have access to? When you have exhausted all the possibilities, then you will be able to successfully argue for an upgrade.

Possibilities and limitations

Most of our media experiences involve the consumption of professional media productions. Over the years, we normalise the **production values** of professional texts to such a degree that it can come as quite a shock when we begin creating media ourselves to find that our productions do not look or sound like those we consume in our daily lives. This difference is largely due to two factors: the equipment that is available to you, and your experience using this equipment.

It is important to develop an honest understanding of what is and what is not possible with the equipment, applications and processes you have. If there is a full TV studio at school, you will be able to design professional lighting set-ups and two-camera action. However, most students do not have these luxuries and must be clever as they work around the limitations of their equipment. If the only printer available is a black-and-white photocopier, then you cannot plan a high-gloss fashion magazine, but you will be able to create a really edgy alternative zine that will look sensational.

Just as important as equipment is your understanding of the possibilities and limitations of your skills and organisational ability. There is little point designing a Bollywood extravaganza starring the whole school if you are shy and can't direct a cast of hundreds; perhaps a documentary or experimental video would be more your style.

Use homework time to develop skills so that when you come to production you will have a realistic grasp of what you can and can't achieve with technologies and time available to you.

Step outside your comfort zone

Once you are familiar with the operation of equipment and software, it is time to push the boundaries technologically and personally. Be brave in your exploration and remember, although media gear is expensive, if you use common sense and don't force it beyond its physical limitations, you are unlikely to break it.

To see just what the equipment can do, and to push yourself to find new ways of using this equipment to convey meaning and achieve the effects you want, try to think outside the square and step

outside your comfort zone. Interestingly, one way to do this is to begin with a mundane subject. It is relatively easy to plan and create products that are about unusual subjects, but you are more likely to learn about the possibilities and limitations of the equipment and develop your imagination if you try to communicate everyday ideas and events in different and exciting ways.

It won't happen overnight ... but it will happen

Try to stretch your technical skills and imagination by capturing the same ordinary event every day for seven days using seven different approaches. Work in the same media form throughout the week, but every day vary your approach to the topic by experimenting with genre, style, story and, most importantly, production codes and conventions such as camera angles and lighting. The aim is to make seven very different productions of the same subject in the same medium.

The first few days will be easy; but days four and five will be difficult as you struggle to find new ways to communicate. By days six and seven, you will find your creativity flowing.

Here are some topics that make excellent subjects for this activity:

- doing the dishes
- feeding the cat
- checking your email
- brushing your teeth
- saying goodnight
- reading the newspaper.

Remember, the aim is to make the ordinary extraordinary! Good luck.

DIY MEDIA EDUCATION

There is never enough time in the classroom to learn all the skills you need to complete your media productions. You have to demonstrate your independent learning and teach yourself. Your teacher will guide you in activities designed to help you learn techniques and develop ideas, but will not be able to provide all the information you need to help you design and produce your productions. Indeed, many of you are likely to possess greater skills in some production areas than your teacher! Be prepared to teach your teacher, and also your classmates; after all, media is a collaborative industry.

In every lesson, you should set personal learning goals. These will include the activities your teacher gives you, but also those you set for yourself. Record your goals in your workbook at the beginning of every class. At the end of class, note your progress and set some homework goals. Your records could look like this:

Date	Goals	Activities	What I learnt today	Homework and follow-up	Useful resources and links

Be that person who always borrows the camera for the weekend. The more time you spend with the equipment, the better your control over it will be. Read the manual, follow your favourite media producers on Instagram. Live and breathe Media; after all, it is fun.

The internet is full of wonderful sites and tutorials about equipment, software and production techniques. You could just google your needs or you could use one of the high-quality curated sites such as the Adobe website or a subscription service. Lynda is a site containing thousands of highly professional curated video tutorials on every piece of media and digital production software you could imagine using. There are also tutorials on cameras and other equipment. Tutorials are grouped according to skill level. Your school may subscribe to this service, but if not, all members of the Melbourne Library Service can access Lynda at a branch or from home. Everyone is welcome to join. This is an opportunity that no VCE Media student should miss!

Over time, you will find the knowledge and skills you acquire is very impressive. How far you take these skills will depend on your drive and commitment. Good luck.



Weblink

Working collaboratively

In Units 1 and 2, you may have the opportunity to work collaboratively. This is a skill that will be valuable if you ever work in the industry. Students working in Units 3 and 4 are in control of their entire production but may need to direct cast and crew. Collaborative skills always come in handy.

Teamwork is not always easy. Here are some tips to help you through the process:

- Keep records of group decisions and ensure that everyone has a copy. Use Google Docs to keep everyone in the loop.
- Create a timeline for each task so that everyone understands their role.
- Everybody is learning. Take time to learn your job and give others in the group time to learn theirs.
- Practise positive regard. Always treat others as you would like them to treat you, even when you don't feel like it.
- Demonstrate how it is done. Lead by example. If you always keep the group's aim as your main focus, others will follow.
- Mistakes happen. You will make mistakes and so will others. Be honest and open. Learn from them.
- Every day is a fresh start. Expect everyone to do the right thing for the team and they will. Smile and say thank you.

Authenticity

The best student productions have a ring of authenticity; they speak to their audience in a way that seems real. Beginning media makers are often advised to make texts about subjects that they know. That is not to say that all student films are about the underside of a warm doona, although a surprising number do contain the clichéd clock shot. Why? Because the sound of the morning alarm ringing is a moment of real tension in the lives of many young people. In student videos, this scene is often beautifully crafted, simply because the filmmaker knows the physical and emotional impact of that simple daily ritual. The clock is perfectly framed and the editing rhythmical, tightly conveying the emotion of the reluctant riser driven from the comfort of sleep.

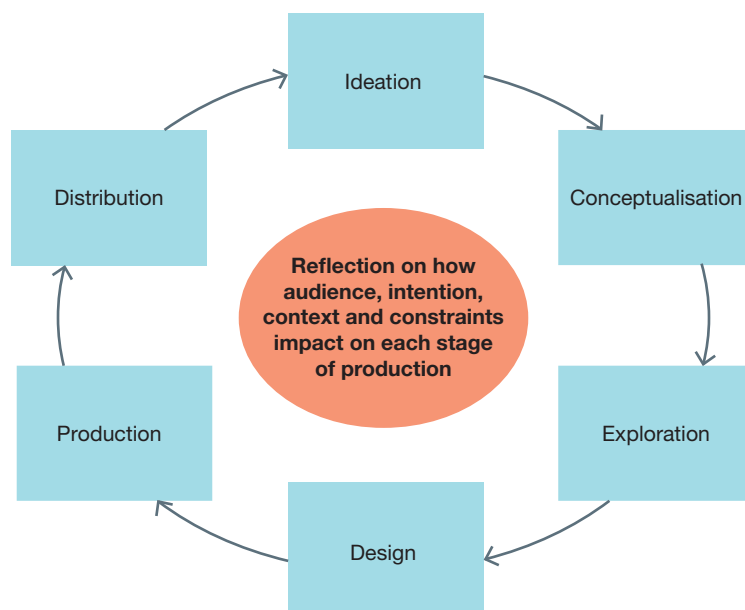
On the other hand, student productions on a gangster theme, for example, usually lack authenticity – not just because the actors are not gangsters, but because the filmmaker's perception of what gangsters are really like has come from the movies. A group of teenagers in suits is never going to pass as a mob of world-weary criminals. Yet, by thinking outside the square, this tired clichéd idea can be turned around. What are the essential underlying themes of gangster texts? Tension and power. What do you know about tension and power? After 10 years at school, you know a great deal because in your day-to-day lives you experience the former and lack the latter. So, rather than try to create a production about characters outside your world, turn it around and write about the tension within your experience.

Media production

Media production is a cycle of creation where each stage informs the next, with the audience at the centre of everything informing each decision.

There are three stages in media production, each with multiple steps:

- Pre-production: ideation, conception, exploration and design
- Production: the shoot, sound recording, image editing, copywriting, page layout, construction of interface, and so on
- Post-production: editing of vision and sound, printing, binding, testing of web functionality and distribution.



Adapted from *VCE Media Study Design*, VCAA.

Production design

All media productions go through a thorough design process termed 'pre-production'. In the film industry, production design is a requirement for achieving the **green light** – raising the funds to move from development to pre-production. Production design informs all stages of a media production by providing planning documentation that every practitioner can use. The process and form of pre-production planning varies according to media form, but all begin and end with audience.

VCE Media students design their productions using the codes and conventions appropriate to the media form in which they are working. For class activities and production exercises, your design may be brief. For complete productions, pre-production documentation will be extensive, as it is in industry. Anyone who reads your production design will understand your production process and visualise the finished product. Your teacher will not allow you to begin production until your pre-production documentation has been approved.

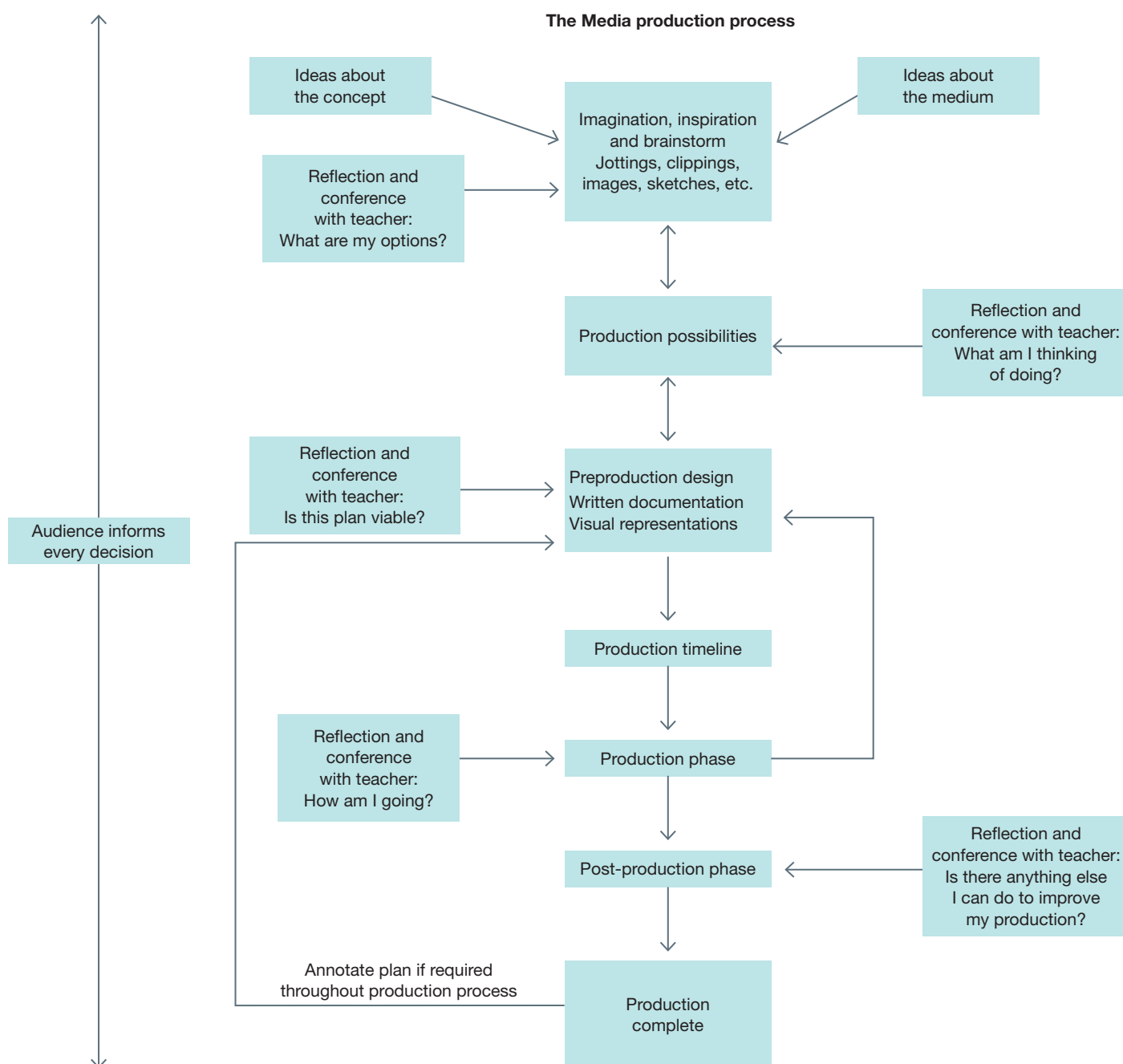


Figure 2.1 The production process for VCE Media

It's my production – why do I have to get approval?

Your teacher has a legal responsibility for anything you do as part of your Media course. They must safeguard that your proposal is achievable, legal, complies with occupational health and safety requirements and conforms with community standards. In addition, it is your teacher's job to ensure that everyone in your class has access to the equipment they need to complete the course.

To ensure that these conditions are met, your teacher will require you to present a written and/or oral proposal and then a design for each activity before you begin production. The more organised these documents are, the more likely you are to be given the go-ahead.

MEDIA PRODUCTION IS A PROCESS WITH THE AUDIENCE AT THE CENTRE

In the beginning – and in the end – it is all about the audience. Without an audience there is no media. Audiences are the reason for creation and the creators of meaning for any media product. An idea, concept, need, passion or vision is nothing without an audience to bring it to life.

It is the concept of audience that differentiates media artists from media professionals. For media creators who see themselves primarily as artists, it is the vision of the project that drives the production process. For media professionals, the driving force is engaging their audience. In VCE Media, you take on the roles of both artist and media professional. You use the design methodology of an artist and employ the technologies, techniques and practices of professionals who work under the constraints of commercial practice in which the audience is the driver.

In the media industry, a successful production is one that appeals to its target market – filling cinemas, increasing ratings, building the circulation of newspapers or magazines, selling subscriptions and generating clicks, likes and buzz.

All media products are made with an audience in mind, but this concept can be vague and unformed. That is why so many professional media productions fail – they do not define the characteristics of their audience sufficiently and, as a result, the product does not engage.

A media professional who makes an unsuccessful product is less likely to be employed again. This means that self-expression must be sublimated or modified to the demands of the audience; after all, they pay the bills. The media is an industry where art and capitalism meet, and it is a rare and beautiful thing when the needs of both can be realised in the same product.

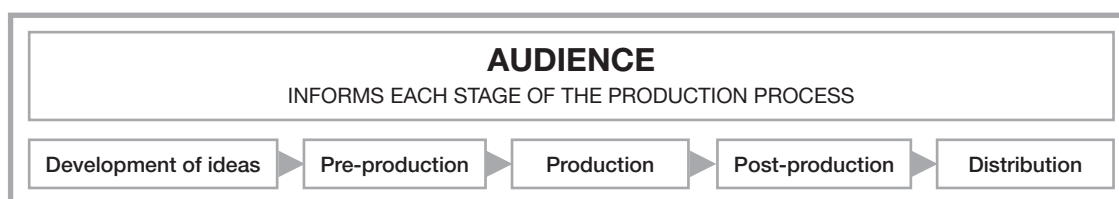
The idea of audience – their needs and desires and how to craft productions that will engage them – underpins every stage in the media production process.



Figure 2.2 If a film was screened in a forest and no-one watched, would it really exist?

PRACTICAL TIP

The film industry calls the design process 'doing your homework'. What this means is that directors plan for everything they possibly can so that every tiny aspect of the production has been visualised, analysed and documented. So work like an industry professional: do your homework!



As the creator of media exercises and products, you must keep your audience at the forefront of every aspect of your work. Engaging your audience will influence every creative decision.

Crafting an audience

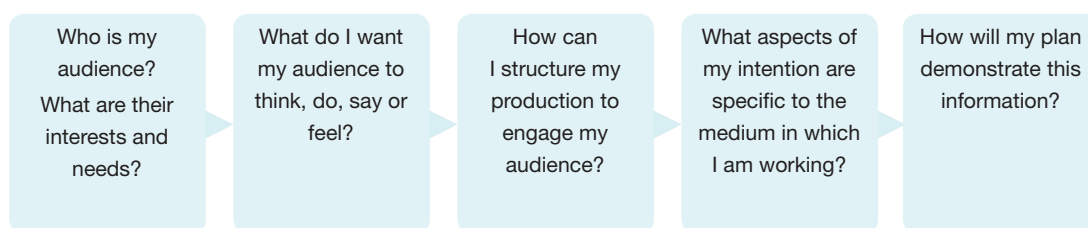
Many students make their productions for an audience of their peers. Teenagers are a demographic that you are familiar with; you know what they like and what they don't. But when you visualise your product, think broadly about a range of possible audiences who might consume it. Think about all the groups you regularly come in contact with, such as parents, grandparents, employers, teachers and children. Use this knowledge to craft your audience – you may be able to design your production for multiple audiences, each of which will read it differently.

When specifying your audience, describe it both broadly and specifically. Try to avoid overly general statements, such as:

- 'People who like art.' (Who doesn't?)
- 'Teenage boys.' (Do you mean 13-year-olds or 19-year-olds? And what kind of boys?)
- 'People who want to look at this type of thing.' (???????)

Defining an audience takes time

When thinking about your audience, use a diagram like the one below to help you define and describe their tastes, expectations and experience. Be creative, make a brainstorm.



Once you have reflected on the questions above, use your brainstorm to help you write a succinct statement about your intended audience. You may like to include the relevant sections of your brainstorm as supporting evidence. The length and depth of this statement will depend on the scope of your production. It may be as short as a couple of paragraphs or much more detailed for your Year 12 production. Ask your teacher for advice.

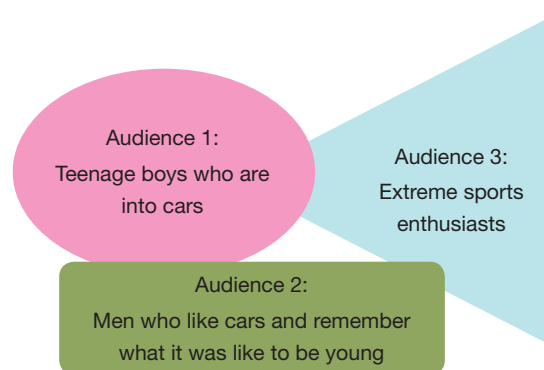
Another way of conceptualising audience is to use demographics. The best media productions often speak on many levels to a wide demographic.

Research company Roy Morgan uses demographic grouping to describe the values and motivation of consumers. Reading these may help you conceptualise your audience better.

Try creating a graphical representation of the characteristics of a range of possible audiences. You may want to add to it as your ideas take shape.

Look for characteristics that each audience has in common, and jot these in the overlapping sections of your diagram. This information will point to aspects of your audience that are more important than others, allowing you to target your design more effectively.

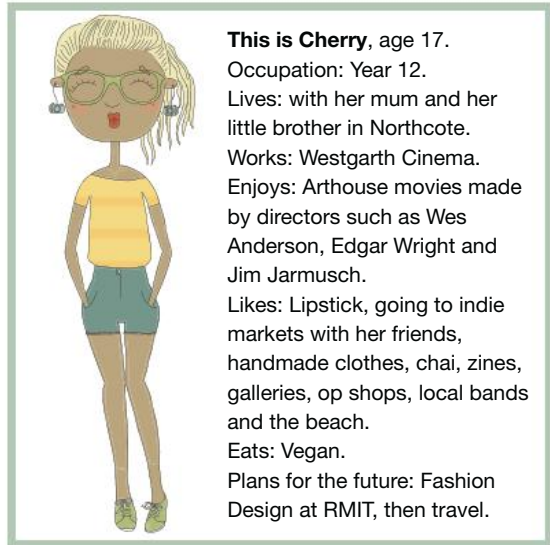
Some students find it useful to conceptualise their audience by the types of media they have enjoyed. Providing examples will help you and anyone reading your production design to understand the tastes of your audience and will help you design a product that will engage them.



Weblink

iStock.com/Sashatigar

This section contains a large number of small, individual doodles. The themes are consistent with the previous sections, focusing on hipster aesthetics. There are many variations of camera lenses, film strips, bearded faces, and vintage-style typography. Some words like "HIPSTER", "vintage", and "F&X" appear multiple times in different fonts. Other elements include a bicycle, a pair of glasses, a hat, and various geometric patterns. The overall style is playful and creative, typical of modern graphic design sketches.

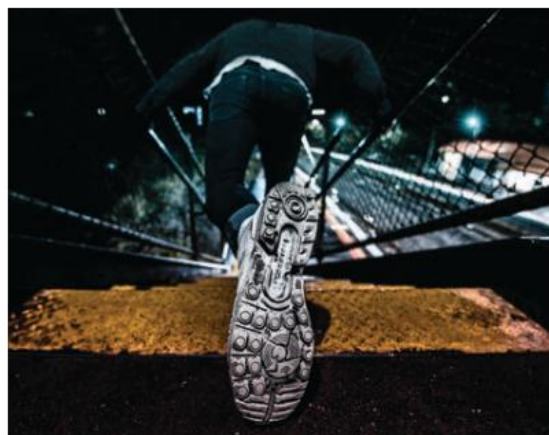


istock.com/artnie

When we think of an audience, we tend to start with age and gender, but these starting points are really broad categories and in most cases not much practical use. Because most of your work is designed for people of your age, let's unpack the pitfalls of age and gender using this group as an example.

Teenagers are not one amorphous group. If you look around your classroom, you will be able to determine different subgroups, each with different tastes and expectations of their media consumption. Even when wearing uniform, these differences are clearly apparent. There might be popular girls or sporting jocks, nerds, musicians, metalheads, gamers, loners or party animals. Each shares the same age group and school, but not much else. When thinking about your audience, it is unlikely that you can engage all of them. Instead, try to find what this group has in common and then which subgroup or groups you will be designing for. You can then include ideas, characters, storylines and media-specific codes and conventions that are designed to engage this audience.

Michael Giannattilio



9780170407038

Most people tend to think of the media production process as linear – moving from idea through pre-production, production, post-production to distribution and audience engagement. This is not the case, however, as media production is

Keep all your ideas and developmental versions of your productions in a workbook or in a folder on your computer so that you and your teacher can track the process of your production from ideation to distribution. It is also a good idea to keep brief notes about advice that you receive from friends, family and your teacher throughout the production process.

Pre-production is all about planning

Ideation

In Units 1 and 2, you will be producing works that explore the concepts covered in other outcomes. The topic and/or task may be provided by your teacher or you may be asked to provide your own. There are many suggested ideas for Unit 1 and 2 projects in Chapters 4 and 7.

If you are unsure about the media form you want to work in, begin by working through the possibilities and limitations of several. This will include analysis of:

- One way to sort through these choices is to create a brainstorm like the one in Figure 2.4.

Some students know which media form they want to work in from the start, but struggle for an idea. If this is you, a brainstorm is also useful.



Brainstorms are about creativity and capturing ideas, not about neatness.

Figure 2.4 Brainstorm the possibilities and limitations of ideas and media forms.

From ideation to concept

Once you have a few ideas, it is time to develop and finetune a concept. In professional media, the concept cycle is a dialogue between the person or organisation commissioning the production and the production team. For VCE Media students, it is the discussions between you and your teacher and, if you are working in a group, between team members. Developing a concept may require several iterations before it is ready for pre-production. Here are some points to think about:

- What is the story and why does it need to be told?
- What is the intended outcome of the production?
- What resources are available? Include skills, equipment and processes, and, if necessary, finances.
- What are the constraints under which you are working? Include the problems that are likely to affect the successful completion of the project. What things are impossible, too dangerous, or cannot be achieved in the time and budget available?

Intention: engaging your audience

Once you have decided on an audience, what do you want to do to them? Here are some possibilities:

- educate
- entertain
- shock
- amuse
- reduce to tears
- outrage
- provide a moment of peace
- encourage a particular behaviour or thought process
- persuade
- please.

Perhaps you want the meaning of your production or the emotions it invokes to speak to your audience of a deeper truth; or maybe you want them to laugh, and while they are laughing they will also learn the lesson your production is designed to teach.

Your media production design should clearly state both your intention and the techniques you will employ to engage your audience and achieve this intention. This information is conveyed in writing and sometimes in images. Some students and media professionals prefer an integrated approach combining writing and images with referencing of existing media and art products.

Here are some examples of intentions:

This short film Thriller will be engaging and confusing viewing for an audience who are interested in the mystery genre and are willing to embark on a journey of the mind rather than emotion. I will employ cinematography that features unusual camera angles and movement to disturb and disorient the audience from the opening. Lighting will be atmospheric, with deep shadows hiding clues to keep the audience engaged. I want the audience to question what is real and what is not, right up to the last scene, but will anchor them with the use of a visual motif in the form of a coffee cup, which will appear in each scene. After viewing, I want the narrative to linger in the audience's mind, as the resolution will be ambiguous because the coffee cup will now have lipstick on it.

NOW is a fashion and beauty magazine targeted at young women. It offers a range of inspiration and ideas for creating an individual and expressive sense of fashion. NOW is different from most traditional teen magazines because it includes alternative op shop and DIY fashion that allows the reader to develop a personal sense of style.

NOW is aimed at those living in or around Melbourne with access to Brunswick Street, Fitzroy, Collingwood, St Kilda and Degrares Street. It will cover fashion available in these locations that is affordable for its audience.

The magazine will use the codes and conventions of magazine layout but reference zine culture and indie styles like Frankie does. This includes an A5 format, matt paper stock, typography that looks hand-drawn and a soft, muted colour scheme that will complement the fashion and accessories featured in the magazine.

My intention in this series of images is to reveal the degradation of the sand dunes around Waratah Bay and by doing so educate my audience about the situation. My images will suggest some solutions to the problem and show what is likely to happen if nothing is done. The work will be in black and white, using high contrast to demonstrate the dire consequences of inaction.



You will find more ideas by studying the VCE Season of Excellence design plans on the Australian Teachers of Media Victoria (ATOMVic) website. Remember, though, most of these plans will be for products made under the 2012–17 study design. The requirements for your designs have changed since then.

Exploration and inspiration

Research and referencing are important developmental processes in production design. Artists and media professionals are always on the lookout for inspiration, collecting ideas from everywhere; you never know when something that catches your eye or fires your imagination will be useful. They term this process ‘referencing’, and use their collected ideas to refine their creativity and explain their proposal to others.

We all steal, but if we're smart we steal from great directors. Then, we can call it influence.

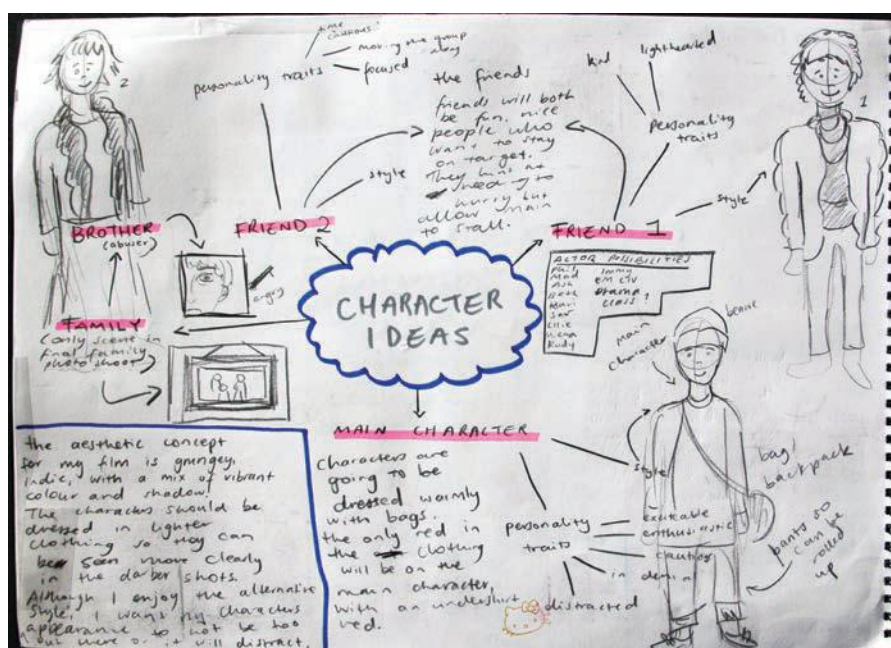
Krzysztof Kieslowski, director of the *Three Colours* trilogy

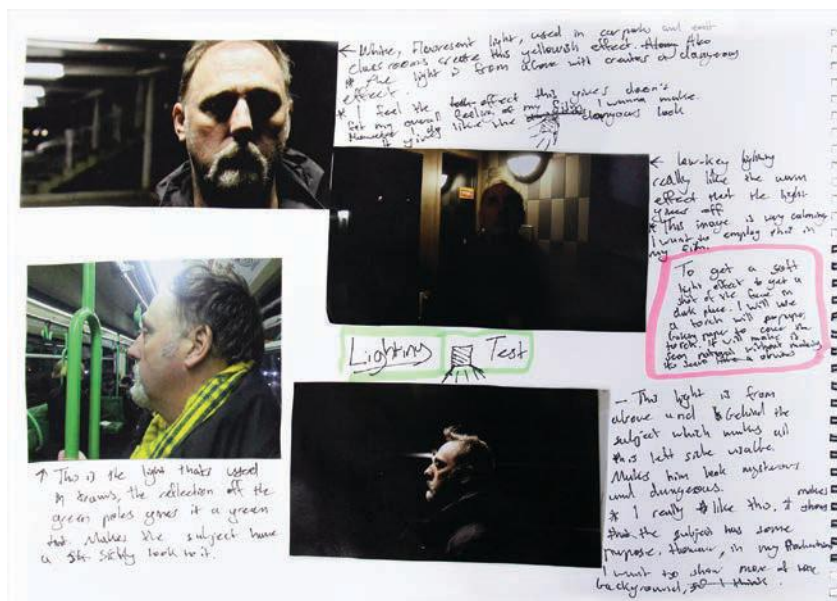
As you think about your proposed product, collect ideas and inspiration in any media form, not just the one you are working in. Some suggestions include images, screenshots, links, the work of industry professionals, examples of colour swatches, sketches, genre, style, typography, pages and layouts, camera angles, lighting, writing, costume, props, paper stock – anything that inspires you or helps you explore your idea.

There are many ways of documenting your exploration and inspiration. The key is your written reflection, which explains why you have referenced the material. Organise your exploration in a workbook, on a mood board or digitally. Annotate each example to explain what it is that appeals to you or could be used in your work. This activity is not about collecting, it is about learning from the material you collect. Your annotations should be focused and evaluate the possibilities of your media form, equipment and ideas.

Discuss your collection of references and your developing ideas with your teacher; they will be able to give you targeted feedback about possible directions.

Here are some examples of exploration that have informed students' media productions:





Appropriation: the Andy Warhol debate

US artist Andy Warhol is famous for his images of Campbell's soup cans, which you can see online at the Andy Warhol Museum. Warhol's art is a perfect example of the dilemma many students face when appropriating, scanning and manipulating the work of others. At what point did the intellectual property rights of Warhol's images move from the Campbell Soup Company to Warhol? At what point does an appropriated image become yours? How much manipulation is enough? What is the difference between homage and rip-off?

The answers lie in the reason for using the appropriated material, and the contribution you bring to an image or idea that makes it yours. There are no hard-and-fast rules, but for the purposes of making media think about the proportion of appropriation to the final work. If you use too much material from other sources, you will find it difficult to claim your production as your own, and you cannot be assessed for any work that you did not create.

Do you need to use appropriated images or footage? In some productions, such as historical documentaries, appropriation is part of the codes and conventions of the genre, while in other productions a similar quantity of appropriation would be a rip-off.

If you are working in print, it is expected that you will design a production that you can make, and this means writing the copy, photographing images and creating advertisements. Photographers should carefully consider the Warhol debate if they plan to use appropriated images: how will you make them your own? If in doubt, ask your teacher.



Weblink



Figure 2.5 At what point did the intellectual property rights of Warhol's images move from the Campbell Soup Company to Warhol?



Figure 2.6 Jack Gamble played with the concept of homage and appropriation in his Polaroid transfer reworking of stills from iconic 1970s films.

CREATING MEDIA PRODUCTION DESIGNS

A media production design is an exercise in visualisation and documentation. It contains both a written planning document and visual representations of your proposed product. The design begins with details of your audience and intention, and includes your annotated referencing and inspiration.

For each production task, check the key knowledge and skills associated with the outcome. These are listed at the beginning of each chapter, and they will give you guidance as to what is required. Your plan should use industry-specific media design codes, conventions and terminology appropriate to the media form, style and genre in which you are working.

Think of your design as a pitch to a prospective client. It should be clear to this client who you are, who your intended audience is, and what you can and will do in your production to engage that audience.

What is in a media production design?

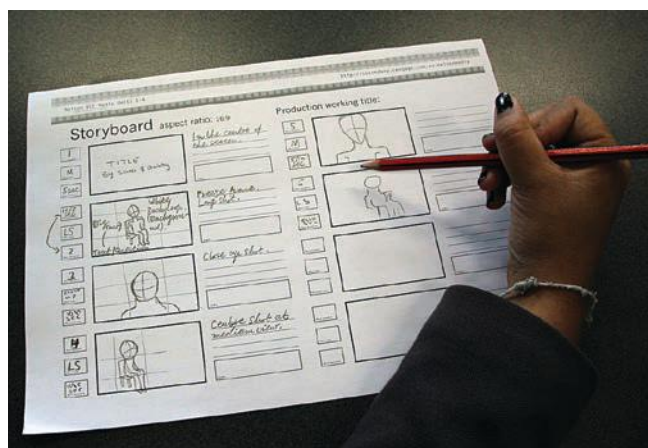
There are no set rules for what should be in a media production design. It will vary according to the specific requirements of the production and the design conventions appropriate to the media form in which you are working. Below is a basic list of suggested content. Requirements will change according to the specifics of your production. Ask your teacher for advice.

For all media forms and productions

- Audience statement
- Intention and techniques to engage the audience
- Annotated inspiration and referencing
- Style and/or genre
- Instructions for cast and crew
- Production documentation, such as call sheets, talent release forms and location agreements
- A timeline that includes all stages of the production

Video, film and animation

- Storyline and/or **outline** of content, such as a **treatment**
- Appropriately formatted **screenplay**
- **Storyboards**
- Shot lists
- Costume and make-up
- Locations and/or setting
- Dialogue, narration and/or interview questions
- Details of camera: **framing**, position and movement, such as a shot list
- Edit details and transitions
- Lighting plans and details
- Music and/or sound effects
- Title and credits sequences



Radio or audio

- Storyline and/or outline of content, such as a treatment
- Sound design
- Sound capture: microphones, position and movement
- Appropriately formatted script
- Location and/or setting
- Dialogue, narration and/or interview questions
- Edit, layering and/or sequencing details
- Music and/or sound effects
- Title and credits sequences





Photography and print

- Method of presentation and exhibition
- Subject/s and/or topic
- Location
- Lighting
- Image composition **mock-ups** and/or page layout designs
- Typography
- Paper stock, method of printing, mounting or binding if appropriate
- Content, such as **copy**, images, illustrations, graphics
- Specialist techniques – for example, selective focus, filtration, manipulating contrast or colour, toning, hand colouring



Digital and/or online productions

- Format
- Method of presentation, distribution or exhibition
- Content
- Sequencing
- Screen design and/or page design
- Technical considerations
- Functionality and/or interactivity
- Typography
- Images and graphical elements – for example, photographs, tables, buttons, hotspots, links

How much is enough?

How will you know if your media design contains everything it needs and has sufficient detail? The test for a good design is if you imagine someone who does not know you, but who knows about how media products are designed and constructed, reading your documentation. If this person can understand your proposal and visualise the finished product – perhaps even use it to make your production – the production design has sufficient detail. Remember, your design is all about content. You will not be assessed on decorative elements. Use industry practices to create your design and do not decorate it. Quentin Tarantino does not have fake bullet holes and blood splatters all over his script and storyboards.

Visualisation

As you design your production, close your eyes and imagine yourself producing it. What do you see? Are you behind a camera or decorating a set? Do you have a microphone in your hand or is it a pencil? Perhaps you are in the darkroom or seated at a computer. This exercise will get you thinking about the production process and may give you some indication about the areas of production in which you are most comfortable.

Fast-forward to your finished production. What do you imagine now? Can you see your audience? How do they react? What are they saying about your work? How do you feel about its reception?

Now come back to the present. What have you learnt that you can use to get your production on the drawing board?

Throughout the design process, it helps to pause from time to time to visualise your proposed production; this will keep you focused on your goals. It is easy to get lost in the design process. You may begin designing one product and end up with another one – which is great (but rare) if the design you end up with is better. What is more often the case is that, if you don't keep a firm grasp on your vision, technology or management issues will get in the way of your grand plan and you will lose creative control.

A few words about health and safety

When designing and creating your media production, keep issues of health and safety in mind. Unlike media professionals, you won't have the luxury of an occupational health and safety officer looking after your interests. You are responsible for everything, so it is worth understanding that, for professionals, every aspect of health and safety – such as stunts, the use of dangerous substances and moving vehicles – is subject to extensive planning and documentation.

You cannot plan to place yourself, your cast or crew in any potentially dangerous or illegal situations.

You must meet health and safety standards and, where appropriate, document how you will do this in your production design. Your production process will create evidence of your approach to health and safety in the form of video, sound, text or photographs. It is important to ensure that your work practices meet community standards at all times. If in doubt, ask your teacher for advice.

For occupational health and safety guidelines for film and TV, visit the Open Channel website.



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VIDEO AND ANIMATION

Designing for video and animation involves a script and a storyboard. Which comes first? It depends on how you think and work. Alfred Hitchcock, director of films such as *Psycho* (1960) and *The Birds* (1963), created beautifully detailed storyboards, but for him the creative process was in the script. Animator Hayao Miyazaki, creator of *My Neighbor Totoro* (1988) and *Spirited Away* (2001), begins with a storyboard.

Once the screenplay is finished, I'd just as soon not make the film at all ... I have a strongly visual mind. I visualise a picture right down to the final cuts. I write all this out in the greatest detail in the script.

Alfred Hitchcock

The screenplay or script

Media professionals move through a number of stages in the production of a screenplay (a script for audio productions); this work results in documents that are used to seek funding or permission for the production: the outline, the treatment and the draft screenplay.

The outline

The outline is a brief explanation, often in point form, of what the production will be about.

The treatment

Depending on the type and length of the proposed production, the treatment for student works is usually between half and one page and is written in the present tense. It includes a detailed description of (as appropriate) the main story arc, character arcs, the topic and/or content and the style of the proposed media production. Use the treatment to pitch your idea to your teacher, classmates and anyone else who will listen. This will help you refine your ideas before you write.

The draft screenplay

The draft **screenplay** is the document that is submitted to your teacher and anyone else who needs to green-light your proposal. Once written, the draft screenplay is workshopped and redrafted to finetune it before it is ready to use in production. Most student productions undergo several drafts.

The conventions of screenplay layout help writers, directors and actors to navigate around the document. It is worth using these conventions when writing. There are a number of free software packages that format scripts as you write, such as Celtx. Alternatively, simply format your document in Word; the example on the next page shows you how. If you subscribe to Adobe CC, you can use Adobe Story. For advice and examples of script formats in film, TV and radio, try the wonderful BBC Writer's Room.

PRACTICAL TIP

Teach yourself scriptwriting by reading the type of scripts you want to write. There are plenty online.



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The scriptwriter's toolkit

Font

Every word and every line of every script is written in 12 point Courier.

Dialogue

Dialogue is what the character speaks. Films are usually driven by the action or conflict between characters. Keep dialogue brief and realistic.

Capitalisation

Sluglines must always be capitalised. Characters' names should be fully capitalised when they first appear.

Sluglines

Sluglines are also called scene headings, headings and scene captions. Sluglines tell the reader where and when a scene takes place. 'INT.' denotes interior and 'EXT.' denotes exterior.

Action lines or big print

Action lines are written immediately after sluglines. They are written in the present tense and explain what is about to happen in visual terms. Some scriptwriters go for brevity, others like to describe the action. Both models are OK.

Beat

There are times when you want to show that the character waits a bit before speaking. A pause in a character's dialogue is indicated by using the term 'BEAT'.

Character

A character is first introduced in an action line. Upon first introduction, the character's name is capitalised. Throughout the script, refer to the character with the same name so as not to confuse the reader. Immediately after the character's name comes the dialogue.

1. INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

SALLY slowly picks up her schoolbag. She hoists it onto her shoulder.

SALLY (VO)

It was another boring day, just like all the rest. I was just glad to get out of there.

2. EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

Several people are waiting at the bus stop. A bus pulls up.

SALLY (OS)

Just get off my case will you?
SALLY steps off the bus and drops her bag. She is speaking into a mobile phone.

A car BACKFIRES, startling everyone.

SALLY

(whining)

What do you want from me?
SALLY looks bored, she is not really interested in the conversation.

SALLY

It's just that -
(beat)

OK, I'll come with you.
Anything for a peaceful life.
SALLY gets back onto the bus.

3. INT. SALLY'S FAMILY HOME - EVENING - FLASHBACK

Dialogue directions

There are times when a writer wants to show how a character speaks. This is rare. Well-written dialogue should speak for itself.

Off screen

This term is used when a character is physically in the scene but not on camera. The camera may be focusing on one character and continuing to focus on the same character. The formatting is the same as for voice-over.

Flashbacks

The easiest way is to indicate a shift in time via the slugline.

Voice-over

A voice-over is used when a character speaks but is not on screen. When two characters are speaking on the phone, the character who is not physically in the scene has their dialogue formatted as a voice-over. A voice-over is formatted simply by writing '(VO)' immediately to the right of the character's name.

Visual representations

I do all my work by storyboard, so as I draw the storyboard, the world gets more and more complex, and as a result, my North, South, East, West directions kind of shift and go off base, but it seems like my staff as well as the audience, doesn't quite realize that this has happened. Don't tell them about it.

Hayao Miyazaki

Costume and set designs, character sketches for animation, lighting designs and storyboards are used to represent your proposed product, to provide information for cast and crew and to organise production.

Storyboards allow you to shoot your video before you shoot the video. By storyboarding every shot, you will visualise your proposed production, which allows you – by yourself, in your own time – to get an idea of what will and won't work. Some students ask: 'Why do I need to go to all that trouble?' The simple answer is, to save yourself more trouble.

Storyboards develop visual relationships, finetune timing and demonstrate the construction of each shot. If a scene or character doesn't work in the storyboard, then it is far easier to make changes at this stage than on set or during the editing process.

Traditionally, filmmakers and other media professionals have used hand-drawn storyboards, page layouts and photographic mock-ups. Visual representations can be beautiful works of art in their own right or they can be quickly sketched representations. Their form is less important than their role. The most important thing is to fill the frame in exactly the same way the finished shot will.

I didn't know the technical language of filmmaking, so I said, 'OK, I'm going to do my own storyboard,' because I had to explain to the crew and the technical people what I wanted.

Robert Redford

Many Media students believe that they can't draw, and find storyboarding and photographic mock-ups challenging. If this is you, don't worry. You don't have to be able to draw to be able to represent your ideas visually, although stick figures are a totally inadequate representation of the physical bulk with which characters fill the frame.

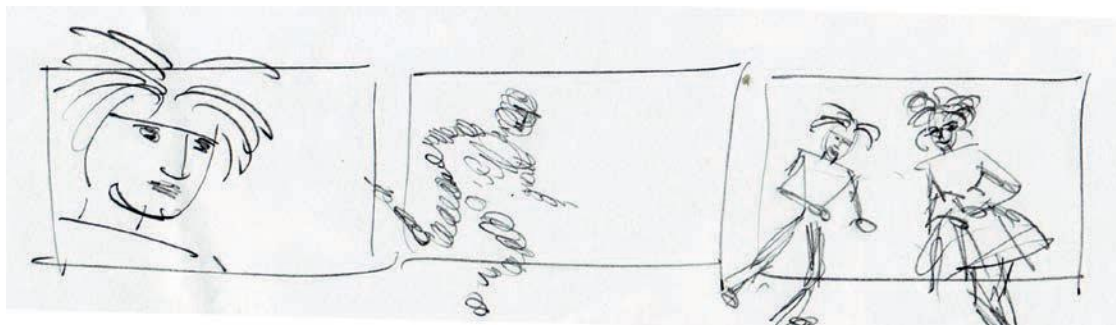


Figure 2.7 Storyboarding techniques for those who can't draw

Techniques to help you learn to represent your ideas visually

- Create a frame to help you see what the camera sees. If you hold the frame in front of your eyes, you will see the world framed as if by a camera lens – hold it closer and you will see long shots, further away and you will see close-ups. Hold it up to the person, scene or object you want to represent and sketch what you see in the frame.
- Copy the real thing. Find shots similar to the ones you propose to use on DVD or online. Still the image and sketch what you see on the screen. Still having trouble? Place a sheet of tracing paper over the screen and sketch on that. Not only is this technique fun, you will very quickly become better at drawing.
- Use jointed wooden artists' models to help you learn how to draw people.
- Use your smartphone to capture trials of shots you want to storyboard, print these images and either use or copy them.
- Try simple software solutions or apps.
- Ask the art teachers at your school for help. Everyone has to start somewhere.

Tips for drawing storyboards

- Download a storyboard template with the same **aspect ratio** as your camera. Usually this will be a 16 × 9 (widescreen) frame.
- Make your **frames** large enough to see detail. A large frame may seem intimidating, but it will give you the space you need. If you do find it is too big, you can always sketch in the correct framing later.
- Use a pencil. This allows you to create shading and subtle effects, and you can erase mistakes.
- Think of landscape, locations and sets as a series of lines – parallel, converging, horizontal or vertical.
- Think of people and objects as a series of shapes – circles, ovals, triangles, squares, rectangles, cones, barrels, and so on. Think of facial features as another series of shapes or lines.
- Sketch rather than draw. Let your hand run lightly over the page – you are not going for accuracy, but impression.
- Think about depth of field. What is in focus, what is slightly out of focus and what is a blur?
- Once the frame is filled, think of light sources, and shade in shadows on features and objects as appropriate.
- Use liner notes (explanations of your drawings) to fill in the details.

You can find storyboard and photographic mock-up scaffolds on NelsonNet.

ACMI has some wonderful resources for storyboarding, including a free storyboard generator.

Use them.



Lucien Perry



Figure 2.8 Copying storyboard images: *Seeds* by Lucien Perry.



Scaffold



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Documentaries are different

Documentaries may be designed as scripted or unscripted. Scripted documentaries are those where the filmmaker knows everything that will appear on screen before they begin. The script determines image and sound before the production begins. This is a useful format for historical or science-based subjects. The process of creating a scripted documentary is like that of producing a drama.

Unscripted documentaries are those where interviews or what happens on the shoot determine the final form of the documentary. For these productions, it is not possible to write a complete script or storyboard prior to filming. However, there are a number of pre-production documents that aid the visualisation, design and production processes.

The first step is research. Because of their nature, many people think that documentary makers discover their subjects during production. While it is true that they do discover aspects of the story at this time, documentaries have been thoroughly researched as part of the pre-production process. Whether the documentary is about people, places, events or things, research is a vital first step. It helps you decide on the approach to your topic, subjects and plotlines. Research will tell you the best places to shoot, the right interviewees, how to engage them in your project and what to ask.

Consider the form and style of your documentary. Have a look at the section on documentary form in Chapter 3. Imagine how each storyline or concept might look on screen. How will you convey your ideas visually?

Once you have researched everything you can before the shoot, create lists of ‘characters’ you will include. Yes, the people you include in your documentary are called ‘characters’ because through the process of shooting and editing the story you will construct them as characters. Write explanations of what each character might bring to the documentary. Create one or more potential storylines that will engage your audience through the inclusion of potential conflict and emotion.

Write a pre-script outline to guide your shoots. Conduct a recce of the locations and storyboard potential shots. Include possible **B-roll** shots, which will provide variety and meaning while hiding

transitions or unwanted footage. The process of visualisation will mean that you have some firm ideas and a sense of direction while being alert to possibilities on the shoot before you go into production.

If your documentary contains interviews, workshop and rehearse questions. Be aware that some questioning techniques are more effective than others. It is better to instruct your subject to respond to a prompt than to ask a question. For example, 'Tell me about the experience' and 'How did you feel?' are likely to command a more detailed and interesting response than 'What did you do?' and 'Were you scared?' Use phrases that will encourage your respondents to structure their answers so that you can eliminate the original prompt during editing. Your documentary will then look and sound like a conversation between the subjects and the audience rather than a quiz. On set, listen to your respondents' answers as you lead them on their journey. Don't rush or be afraid to add follow-up questions. Reshoot questions if necessary, perhaps changing the camera angle.

After each shoot, review and log your footage. Never destroy any footage; you may want a second or two from a bad take. Create a final script in which you select and craft the best shots and omit footage that does not match your intention or is unsuitable. The script should detail sound, including transcripts of interviews and narration, titles and effects, if required. This helps you control the editing process, providing a clear written vision from which you can work.

Documentary scripts look different. Post-shooting scripts are usually set out in three columns, as shown below.

Narration and interviews	Images	Soundtrack
Excerpts from transcript of interviews and narration, if used	Moving and still images	Music, sound effects, atmosphere

Here is an example:

Narration and interviews	Images	Soundtrack
Narrator: It was a day like any other. Sally: I had been at school when ...	Pan across suburban street Cut to Mid shot: Sally sitting on fence	Birds and lawnmower sound dissolves into soft ambient music, which fades as Sally begins to speak.

'How to Write a Documentary Script' by Trisha Das is an excellent resource for those wanting greater detail on developing a documentary.

Designing for photography and print

Photography and print are popular media forms for VCE students. There is a lot of overlap between the two, but print is defined through its use of **typography**, the style and arrangement of words in the form of type.

Students who work in photography or print may select any style or genre, from fine art to zines. This decision will be based on your audience and intention. Because you will be printing your own work, it is important to investigate the printers and paper stock available to you before beginning the design process. This will determine the type of works you can produce.

Art elements and design principles are integral to photographic and print design. These aesthetic elements work together to structure an image or page. They include:

- Art elements
 - Line: visible or invisible lines lead the audience to the **focal point** of an image or from one point to another; line creates depth and perspective, pattern and movement, and separates sections of interest
 - Colour: suggests meaning and creates mood and contrast
 - Texture: variations in the surface of an object or subject that suggest meaning
 - Tone: gradation or variation between black and white to suggest meaning or create depth
 - Shape: organic or inorganic, regular or irregular shapes suggest meaning
 - Form: constructs meaning through structuring of objects, subjects and symbols
- Design principles
 - Emphasis, dominance or focal point: the part of an image or page that is structured to draw the eye
 - Movement: also known as flow, movement directs the audience through a work



- Rhythm: visual rhythm through repetition creates a pattern or suggests movement that brings a work together; textual rhythm engages a reader
- Unity: linking elements in a unified way creates harmony
- Variety: controlled difference in elements provides points of interest
- Space: empty areas of the frame that draw attention to an image or text
- Repetition or pattern: any element that appears more than once
- Balance: the relationship between elements
- Contrast: the difference in tone and/or colour
- Proportion: the relationship between objects and the frame or page
- Scale: the relative size of elements within a frame or page.

One way to begin seeing the elements in any composition is to draw lines to identify shapes and arrows to indicate direction. This technique will help you understand **visual composition** and how the eye travels around the frame and engages the audience. It will also help you design your own images.

Photography and print productions should be unified. Each image or page will clearly relate to the others aesthetically and in terms of subject matter, image design and image size. In your production design, discuss how you have designed for unity.

You don't take a photograph, you make it.

Ansel Adams

Photography

Photography is so embedded in our daily lives that most people imagine that great photography just happens and that it is all about the subject. Nothing could be further from the truth. Great photographs are the result of great design and lots of practice manipulating subjects within the frame. The more images we make and analyse, the better our sense of design.

Your first 10000 photographs are your worst.

Attributed to Henri Cartier-Bresson



Figure 2.9 Analyse images to reveal art elements and design principles.

There are rules for composing images

Are you aware that almost every time you snap a quick pic you are following the rules of composition? This largely unconscious act is due to the sheer number of images you have read throughout your life. We simply believe that image composition is natural, just the way all images are. But who created the rules, and what happens if you break them?

It is not known if the aesthetics of image composition are innate or cultural, but we all recognise a good photograph and feel uncomfortable if we take a bad one. Try it, use your phone to deliberately take a good photo of your classmates and then frame and take a bad one. See how uncomfortable you feel? Look at any book or website about image design and you will find the rules of image composition. Here are a few to get you started.

The **rule of thirds** trisects the frame vertically and horizontally, as shown in the diagram here. The rule of thirds states that the subject should be placed at the intersection of a vertical and horizontal line; this allows for tension, energy, balance and equilibrium within the image.

A line should never cut the image in half, either horizontally or vertically. It is more aesthetically pleasing if lines approximate those of the rule of thirds.

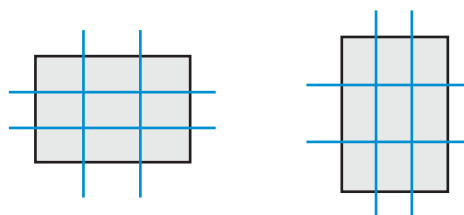


Figure 2.10 Landscape and portrait rule of thirds



Figure 2.11 Apply the rule of thirds to this shot.

Portraits usually frame head space above the subject and the eyeline should be around the intersection of the centre and upper third of the frame. Subjects should never be framed with objects 'growing' out of their head.

Audiences read images from left to right. If a subject is side-on in the frame, they should look to the right and there should be more space to match the direction of their gaze.

Of course, once you know the rules you can choose to break them, to challenge, entertain or disturb your audience. Try designing images that break the rules; it might add distinctiveness to your work.

What does a photographic design look like?

Photographic design usually takes the form of rough sketches or mock-ups of the proposed image accompanied by liner notes – written explanations about how the image will be staged and shot. Designs should be large enough to include all the relevant details.

If you are planning a production where you are unable to create firm designs, such as street photography or one-off events, the design process will involve studying images of your location, topic, style or similar events to learn as much as you can before sketching proposed images. This will help you prepare for your shoot through the process of visualising image construction. When you are at the shoot, you will be in control and able to take advantage of opportunities as they arise.

Designing print

The design process for print production depends on the audience, intention, genre and style of the work and on the software, printers and paper stock available. Student print production differs from professional works in that you will not only design the magazine, you will also write the copy as well as creating images and graphics. In industry, each of these tasks is undertaken by a specialist professional.

Typically, students working in print undertake the writing process at the same time they design their production. Your media design should contain examples of the types of journalism and designs for the images that will form part of the production.



Figure 2.12 What is the effect of framing on meaning in these images?

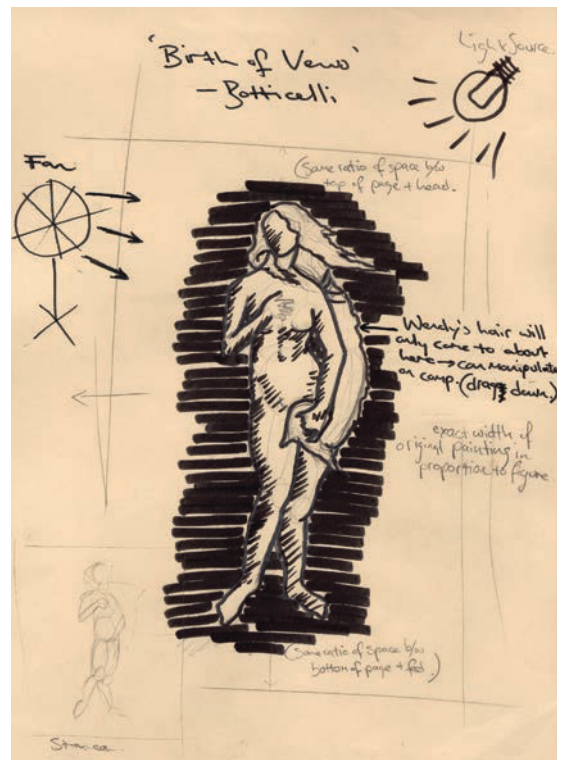


Figure 2.13 A photographic image design by Sarah Bruere

Print designs begin with a template that will form the skeleton of the production. Each page will then conform to the same design principles, which will tie copy and images together. Most templates are based on a grid.

What is a grid?

A grid is a system of lines that are used to organise content in a print and web production. When a production is based on a grid, each page relates to the others and, as a result, the production has an aesthetic consistency and unique visual identity. Grids also help to organise workflow during the production process, because design decisions have been made.

Grids are often based on columns, as the images below illustrate. By the way, **Lorem Ipsum** is placeholder text used in print design to simulate the look of the final product.



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Begin by working on paper. Play around with your content, using the elements of art and design to visualise how each page might look. Your early hand-drawn sketches will help you decide on the grid format that works for your production. Try different grids to see what works. Think about how your copy, images and graphics will work in several grid styles. Place random images and blocks of text onto your grids to see how they look.

At this point, decide on fonts, typographical style and graphic elements.

Your choice of typeface is as important as what you do with it.

Bonnie Siegler, graphic designer



Typography

An important facet of print production design is typographical style. **Typefaces** communicate meaning. Which **fonts** will you use? Will they be serif or sans serif? How many fonts should you use and what size should they be?

Type is like Lego.

Mark Simonson, font designer

Typography organises text and creates meaning. It does this through hierarchy, the use of fonts to emphasise some content over others. Hierarchy helps readers scan a document and understand the relationship between different sections. Study the typography used in this book. How many typefaces and fonts are there? How does the selection, size, colour and layout of fonts structure meaning and lead students through the course?

Type is like the air; we need it to live and don't notice it, until someone farts.

Fabio Maag, typeface designer

The best typography is aesthetically pleasing, invites readers into a publication and encourages them to keep reading while not drawing attention to itself. When designing your production, study similar works and note how typographical decisions impact on style and legibility. Most productions use a limited number of fonts that relate to each other through harmony or contrast.

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A B C D E F
 G H I J K L
 M N O P Q R
 S T U V W
 X Y Z



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Figure 2.14 Serif and sans serif styled typefaces

Here are some print production terms you will need:

- **Serif:** a slight projection or decorative flourish finishing off a stroke of a letter in certain typefaces; traditionally thought to be more legible, although this is now debated
- **Sans serif:** typefaces without serifs
- **Copy:** the written material that will be in a print production
- **Text:** copy that has been typeset and inserted in a print production
- **Typesetting:** the process of arranging and laying out copy
- **Display typography or big type:** larger fonts (14 point plus) that draw attention and are suitable when fewer words are used, such as in headlines and posters; big type is at the top of the typographical hierarchy
- **Text typography:** font selection, layout and alignment of copy, words, lines, paragraphs and column spacing for legibility; used for body text
- **Lorem Ipsum:** placeholder text used when designing print productions.



Figure 2.15 Sometimes you may want to use fonts for aesthetic effect.

Once you have decided on your grid, typefaces and a rough layout, it is time to put these together using page layout software. You can then adjust your ideas, insert placeholder images and text and even print your designs to see how they will look.

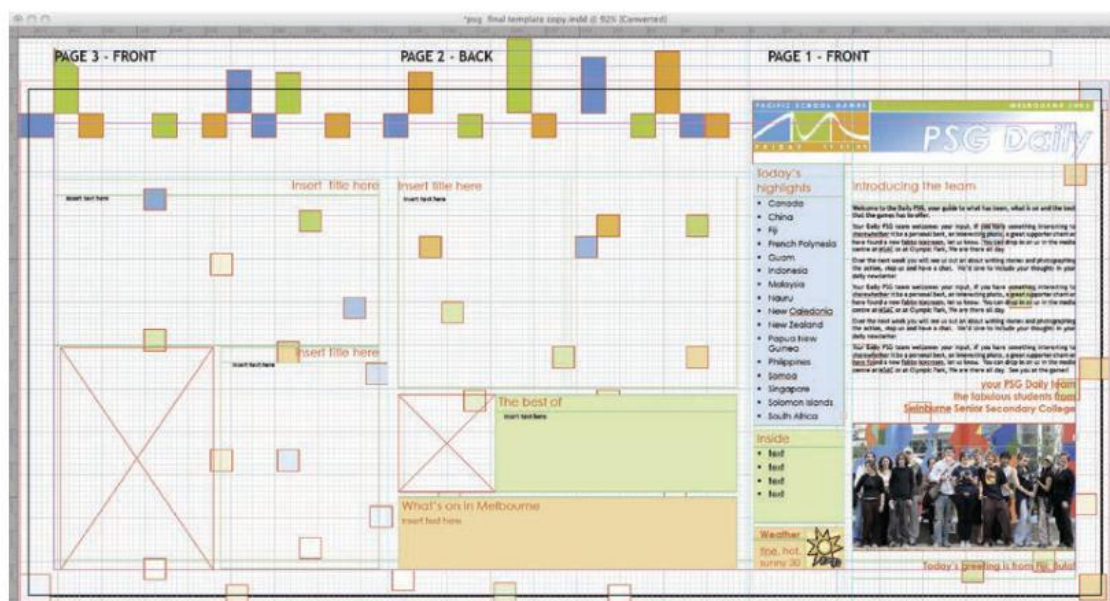


Figure 2.16 Experiment with your design.

PRACTICAL TIP

If you want a bit of fun with your placeholder text, try using Bogan Ipsum, created by a former VCE Media student.



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When you are ready to delve into the fabulous world of typography, try Fontology or Thinking With Type to teach yourself all things typographical.

Designing for audio

Anytime in radio that you can reach somebody on an emotional level, you're really connecting.

Casey Kasem, American DJ

The popularity of audio in the form of podcasts has risen dramatically in recent years. It is an excellent media form to work in because of the huge range of styles and genres available. The technology can be as simple as your phone – just add a microphone – or as complex as a recording studio. Audacity is free audio software that will enable you to produce complex multi-track sound from any computer. There is an extensive database of free training tutorials and advice.

If you are interested in this media form, consider getting some training at Syn Media or your local community radio station.

BBC Academy has a huge range of podcasts and sites about designing and producing audio.



Genre and style

Think about the audio productions that have engaged you recently. Chances are that music is dominant, but this media form is so much more than music. You can design and produce works in a range of genres and styles. Popular genres include drama, comedy, factual programming such as documentaries, children's programs, entertainment, news, talk (discussion, conversation and interview) and educational programs. Within these genres, the styles you can employ are endless. The best way to find genres and styles that you like is to download a podcast app and subscribe to a range of podcasts.

Developing a script

Writing for radio has been termed 'writing for the eyes'. While this might sound strange for an aural medium, it conveys the essence of good writing for sound productions. As audio guru Audrey Geller explains, 'a talented storyteller who writes with dazzling detail can tap into all of the imagery and emotion stored in the listener's brain and make him feel that he really is "seeing" the story'.

Writing for audio involves the usual questions:

- What is the story?
- Who is the story about?
- Where and when is this story set?
- Why does this story need telling?
- How am I going to engage the listener?

Of these, how is the most important because it opens up so many creative choices. How do I want my audience to feel? How can I create the story visually in the audience's head? How am I going to make them care? How can I structure the story to keep the audience listening? How can I appeal to a range of audience members? How will my audience listen – via radio or with headphones?

Well-written radio, whether for drama or documentary, will help people to colour between the lines, to see and feel the stories they're hearing.

Suzi Taylor, ABC radio producer

Audio includes everything that is heard, not just dialogue. You should design your production and write your script with all audio elements in mind:

- Spoken word: announcer, dialogue, interviews, crowd noise, **vox pops**
- Clarity and brevity: typically your listener only gets one chance to hear and is usually listening while doing other activities; write clearly and keep each piece of information brief
- Music: will music be a feature or used to add atmosphere or under voices?
- SFX (sound effects): atmosphere from locations, particular sounds that add to the visual effect, signal the passage of time or suggest meaning should be considered in planning

- Pace and rhythm: structure the script to engage audiences and provide clues as to development of **story arcs** and **character arcs** (see page 290)
- Audio mixing: how many layers of sound do you plan to use?

There is a feeling, when you listen to radio, that it's one person, and they're talking to you, and you really feel their presence as one person.

Ira Glass, producer of *This American Life*

When writing for audio, use an active voice. Your work is for listeners, not readers. Show, don't tell. Avoid explanations and write more in the present than you would normally. 'OMG! It was fabulous!' is much more engaging than 'I felt really great.' Remember, writing for radio is a one-way conversation. Your listener cannot ask for clarification. Keep it clear and simple. Design the audio you want to listen to.

Audio script formats

Script formats will depend on the genre in which you are working. Documentaries follow a two-column format similar to that used for video documentaries. Radio scripts are also similar, but lines are numbered and the layout is slightly different.

- 1 MUSIC: Theme song plays, fades.
- 2 ANNOUNCER: Good evening and welcome to Dave's football podcast, featuring Dave and Jeff.
- 3 SFX: Football siren
- 3 DAVE: Hi everyone. On tonight's show, I'll be interviewing the coach of the Peewees under nines ...
- 4 JEFF: ... and I'll be talking about footy food. But first, let's hear a few minutes from the last quarter of Saturday's game.
- 5 EXCERPT: Pre-recorded audio
- 6 DAVE: (excited) Whew! What a finish!

Audio designs are visual too

When designing for audio, it can be useful to create a graphical representation of your sound design that illustrates each layer or track. These graphs are called 'audio sequencing charts' and can also be useful when designing video soundtracks.

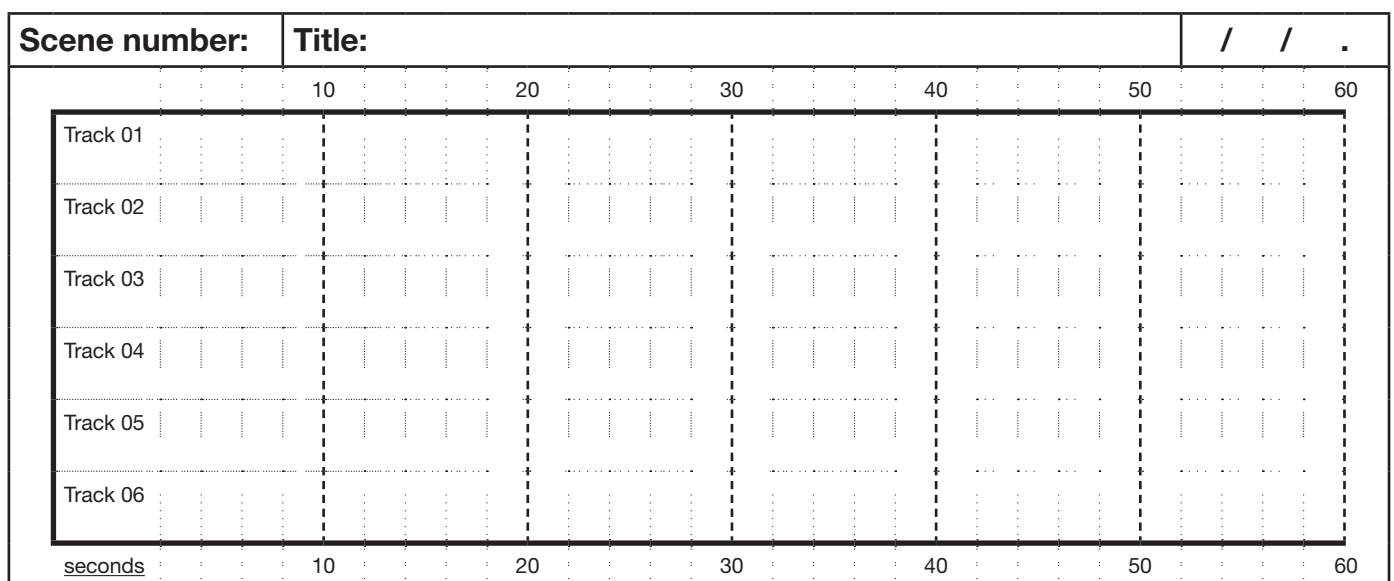


Figure 2.17 Audio sequencing chart

Designing digital, online and convergent products

Online and convergent products are developments of earlier media forms combined with the added functionality and aesthetic qualities of digital technologies. Many of the production planning techniques outlined above, such as image design, typography and layout, will be applicable to production designs for products created and distributed using digital technologies. Design conventions for digital productions that are particular to the technological form are beyond the scope of this book. Students wishing to work in these forms should consult their teacher and the VET Digital Media and Computing teachers at their school. In addition, there are a number of excellent tutorial sites that will be of some use. Of these, Lynda is easily the best.



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Copyright

All creators hold the **copyright** to their intellectual property. Copyright lasts for 70 years after the death of the creator. Sometimes students want to use material in their works that they did not create. This material is called 'third party' works or content and includes music, sound recordings, images, screenshots, advertisements, illustrations, lines from songs, poetry, books, plays or websites, logos and graphics. Often copyright will reside in several places, such as the writer of a song, the band that performs it and the recording company that releases the song. Cover versions of songs are subject to copyright.

As a student, you should be aware of copyright from the start of production design. If you want to publish or display your work in any locations other than in your school, you will need to obtain copyright clearance. This includes YouTube, Vimeo, Facebook, Instagram, film festivals and photographic competitions, the VCAA Season of Excellence or any location where the audience is asked to pay for entry. Obtaining copyright clearance can be very time-consuming and expensive. So what can you do?

Use original material. Ask local indie bands for permission to use their songs. They often want exposure. Ask the musical people in your school to help out or get creative and have a go yourself. There are many sites that provide free downloadable copyright-free material, including music. Incompetech is probably the most well known, but you can also search for music and images released under Creative Commons.

Although it can be tempting, it is important that you never ask your teacher whether you can break the law 'just this once'. If the answer is yes, you are doomed to know that your work will only be seen in class and the wide world of internet fame is not for you. You are studying Media, and after all the work you put into your production, you deserve an audience!

For more information on copyright clearance, see the VCAA Season of Excellence website.



Sarah Bruere

Figure 2.18 Sarah Bruere did not have to seek permission from the original artist, who was long gone.

Production schedules

How much time do you have to complete your production? During pre-production, work back from the submission date to estimate how long each task will take. Allow some wiggle room for sharing equipment, learning new skills such as printing and mounting images, the iterative process of drafting and issues that arise along the way, such as poor weather, illness or equipment failure. Include your production schedule in your design.



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Production scheduling begins before creating the script and storyboard:

- Download and print a blank calendar.
- Mark the day your project is due, and then move this back a few days to allow for test viewing and adjustments, as well as for contingencies such as equipment breakdown.
- List all the tasks required to complete your project and the order in which they must be done.
- Mark those tasks that stand alone and those that are dependent on the completion of others that have come before. For example, the storyboard and script are dependent on each other, but title and credits sequences can be started before the editing of a video project is complete.
- Make a realistic assessment of how long each job will take.
- Check the availability of equipment and your access to facilities, and factor these into your planning.
- Use your calendar to work backwards from the due date, insert each task and, if working in a group, the names of the team members responsible.

Create the documents you need:

- casting and talent release documents
- crew if needed
- contact information
- costumes, make-up and props
- set design and construction
- catering
- shot list, including B-roll
- call sheet
- location permissions and recce.

Group productions

Workflow planning is especially useful when working in a team. Allocating specific tasks, and planning where and when these tasks will be completed, will ensure that your production is completed on time and without the hassles collaboration can bring.

Team cohesiveness is the key to successful productions. Everyone in the team needs to be committed to the production and sensitive to the needs of others. Clear lines of responsibility need to be established, with everyone agreeing to these and to a system for resolving any problems. A contact list will ensure that everyone can be included in decision making. Use Google Docs to keep everyone connected and literally on the same page.

Once the team is determined, a skills audit will ensure that tasks are allocated on the basis of skill and – because, just as in the professional media, everyone needs to be trained – a willingness to learn. There are plenty of production opportunities in VCE Media, so share the production roles around and be prepared to teach each other.

Now you are ready to proceed.

Plan for post-production

Some stages take much longer than others. Post-production is one of these. Editing images, vision and sound seems straightforward during pre-production but can become a black hole of time as you delve deeper and deeper into the possibilities afforded by the edit suite. Plan realistically and remember that you will be learning on the job. The more you discover about the software you are using, the greater the creative possibilities can become, which inevitably leads to blow-outs in the edit. Plan for this leap in your skills and creativity.

PRODUCTION TIPS AND TRICKS

Video, animation and sound

A basic rule of thumb for student video is that you should have at least 10 minutes of footage for every minute that will appear in your final production. Many students have up to an hour. It takes a minimum of one hour to edit one minute of your production; some sections will take hours or even days. Remember, your time is precious. Keep this in mind at all stages of planning, production and post-production.

PRACTICAL TIP

Work clean! Video and photographic images can eat hard drive space. Delete or move all social images and video from your computer before importing your footage. Your computer is less likely to crash and will run faster.

What can you do to maximise your chances of success?

- Call all cast and crew the night before and the morning of a shoot.
- Use a tripod!
- Charge batteries and check all equipment. Clean your lens.
- Use your production design and a detailed shot list to work efficiently and take charge on location.
- Shoot multiple takes of each shot. You will have more good footage from which to select and will not have to spend time rescuing or disguising weak footage. Use two cameras, if possible.
- Record some room sound, sometimes called atmos or ambient sound, at each shoot. You never know when you might need a bit of clean sound in edit.
- Feed your cast and crew! Get your mum to help.
- Label your memory cards! Keep them in large labelled sealed plastic pockets so you don't lose them.
- Keep scrupulous records of everything you do during production, and annotate your production design as you go to remind yourself of what you were thinking at the time.
- Never record over any source footage – ever! Memory cards are cheap and computers crash. Computer failure is not grounds for an extension of time in the VCE. If you have all your source footage, you will be able to recover from any computer glitch.
- Log your footage before you get to the computer. Know what works and what doesn't, and where it all is. This process familiarises you with the footage, and it will help you create an EDL (edit decision list).
- Complete a paper edit so that you know exactly what you need to do during the editing process. This will save you from wasting time speculating about possibilities and looking for that elusive perfect take.
- Create rough cuts of your title and credits sequences before the end-of-project rush. Keep them to use as a model. This will save you time in those precious final hours.

Photography

Don't shoot what it looks like. Shoot what it feels like.

David Alan Harvey, photographer

- Know your camera and practise, practise, practise. Be that annoying kid with the camera. Learn all the settings. Download the manual to your phone.
- Take your production design with you. Use it and write notes as creativity takes hold.
- Take a spare battery. Clean your lens.
- Always shoot at the highest resolution possible in your camera. Shoot in RAW and JPEG, if possible.
- Shoot every planned image and then, when moments of creativity strike, shoot these too.
- Work slowly. Be thoughtful and talk to your subject. Find your rhythm.
- Stop looking at the screen after each shot. Learn to use the viewfinder.
- Shoot a minimum of 10 frames of every image. Then move slightly and shoot 10 more. Repeat and then repeat again. Keep moving.
- Be aware of your aperture (depth of field settings) to ensure that those parts of your image that you want sharply focused are.
- If your camera has AEB (automatic exposure bracketing), and most DSLRs do, use it. Go to the Digital Photography School website to find out more about exposure bracketing.
- See the light. The difference between a happy snapper and a photographer is using the light. Shape the light to your needs.
- Only use the pop-up flash in bright sunlight to eliminate shadow, never indoors where it will create them.
- Shoot in the golden hour. The light is soft and colours pop.

Photography is a way of feeling, of touching, of loving. What you have caught on film is captured forever ... it remembers little things, long after you have forgotten everything.

Aaron Siskind, photographer



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POST-PRODUCTION

The key to effective post-production is organisation. This is where your production design and schedule come in. Use them extensively and write notes in the margin as you go.

Workflow

Workflow is the buzzword in media production. While the traditional stages still govern the production process, workflow is a plan for how and when each post-production task is achieved. The workflow plan is vital to achieving a project on time.

Video, animation and sound

Log your footage, then you will know where to find it. Import your footage onto your computer. Create a backup on a different disk.

First assembly involves creating a very basic version of your footage on the timeline. Use your logging notes.

The rough cut and variations are where you play with ideas. It is followed by the first cut, which is usually overlong and flabby. Time to hit it with the edit stick. The next cut is the fine cut, which is where, in the words of media professionals, you 'kill your darlings'. Yes, I know you shot it, but even though a shot took all afternoon to capture, if it is rubbish or redundant then it has to go. At this point, finetune your titles, effects, sound and colour grade if necessary.

Before the final cut, conduct a test screening and use your critical friends to tell you whether what you see on the screen is what they see on the screen. Take their advice, or if you can't, get a second opinion and then take their advice. Even professional filmmakers can get too close to their productions to see what is really there.

Export your production to the format you require and sit back and enjoy your final cut. Do not delete anything until after your teacher has seen your work.

The critical friend

All media producers need a critical friend, and in VCE Media your classmates will fulfil this role. When your production is at the rough cut or test print stage, ask your classmates to give you feedback. Because you have worked so closely on your product, you may not see or hear faults that are obvious to others. Your timing might need tweaking, dialogue may be inaudible to someone who has not written the script, or a spelling error that you have not noticed may affect the impact of a poster or titles sequence.

Ask your critical friends for three things:

- something that you did well
- something that really needs fixing
- something that could be tweaked.

It is hard to be a good critical friend. Be kind but honest to others and they will be kind and honest to you.

Digital photography post-production workflow

We all get excited when we take photographs and in our enthusiasm often make mistakes or take short cuts in image management. Before we know it, we have accidentally written over an image and it is ruined. But there is another way. Digital photography workflows are systems that help you organise and save, import, post-process and print images. By learning and using the same workflow every time, you will save time and never lose a valuable image.

Depending on the software you are using, your processes may vary slightly. Use tutorials for your software to learn the specifics. The following information is a general guide.

The post-production workflow is divided into four stages, as outlined below.

Image management

- Download your images to the computer. Do not put them into apps such as Photos, but save to a designated and clearly labelled folder. Make a backup copy of this folder on a memory card or another computer.
- Check your images and delete any that are out of focus or otherwise faulty. If you are using a program such as Bridge or Lightroom, rate and prioritise images for further processing.

Basic optimisation

- Open the image and save as a copy.
- Make the biggest changes (those that apply to the whole image) first, then work your way to smaller details.
Big-picture optimisation includes:
 - crop and straighten
 - correct distortion
 - adjust white balance, levels, exposure and tones.

Finetuning

- Apply local adjustments, such as dodging and burning, and selective colour to those areas of the image that need it.
- Apply noise reduction.
- Sharpen.
- Retouch small areas that require it. This includes spot and artifact removal, cloning, enhancement or removal of unwanted parts of the image, and so on.
- Apply special effects.

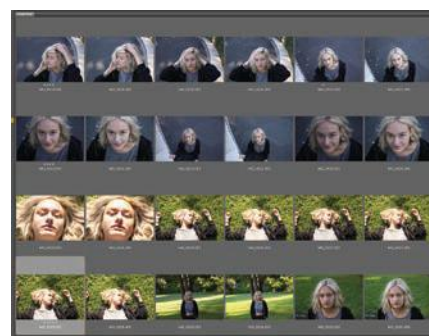


Figure 2.19 Rate your images.

Output and backup

- Scale the image for the required output. If this is print, 300 dpi is suitable for high-end printers. If you are outputting to the web, use PetaPixel's handy social media cheat sheet.
- Flatten the image and save with the image title. Keep both files.
- If printing, conduct a test print to determine if further post-production is necessary.
- Prepare your image for mounting or other presentation as outlined in your production design. Play with different mounting options. Note the effect of mounting on the image below.

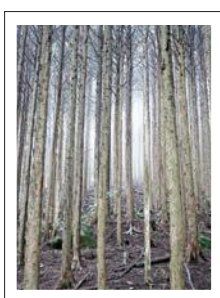


Figure 2.20 Image straight off the printer



Figure 2.21 Image prepared for foam core mount

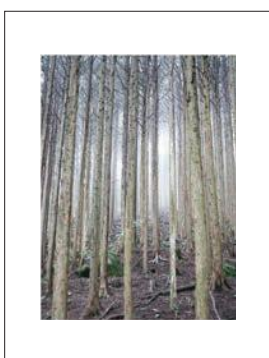


Figure 2.22 Image with white mount



Figure 2.23 Image with black mount

Printing your productions

All students must retain full creative and technical control over every aspect of the printing process. In recent years, there has been a huge rise in the popularity of printing bureaus, where professionals and amateurs can have their productions printed from a USB flash drive. These are great for small businesses and sports clubs, but Media students need to experience the entire process to fully understand the intricacies of print production. You need to make selections about paper stock and design your production for the printers available to you. This will see you resolve issues such as calibrating the screen to the printer, colour matching, image resolution and whether the printer can handle bled pages.

Printing your own work means that you have control from the beginning to the end of the process. It is inevitable that students beginning to work in print will have a range of questions and experience many problems that will lead to a fuller understanding of the print process. It is a rare student who, after the first draft, does not want to tweak their production to make it the best it can be.

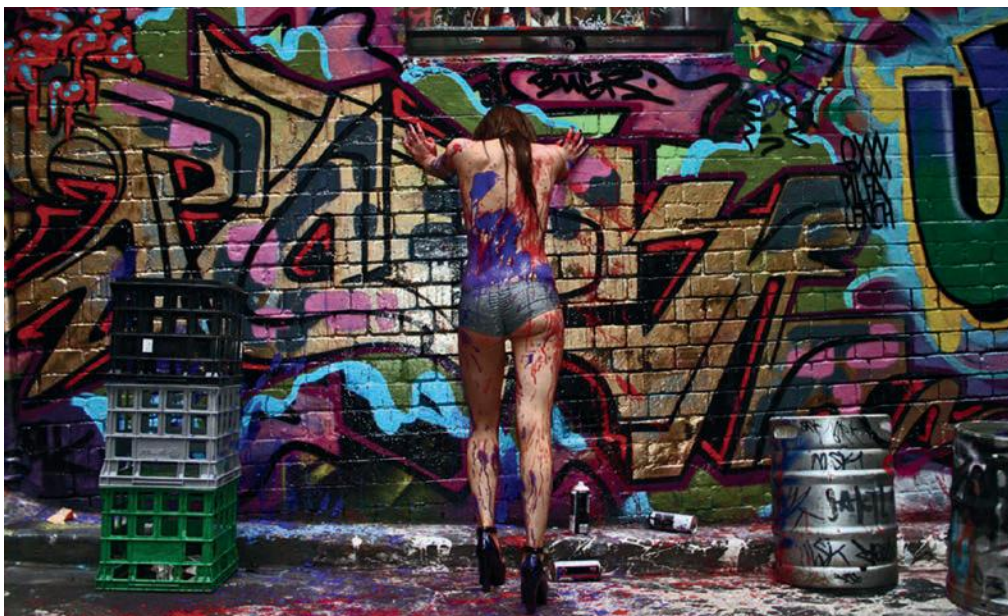
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN YOUR PRODUCTION DESIGN AND YOUR PRODUCTION

Your production design is a living document. You will use and annotate it throughout the production and post-production processes. When you submit your work, you will also re-submit your design. There should be a strong relationship between your design and your product. That said, in realising your design, your work will also reflect your developing skills and knowledge. The notes in your design will help your teacher understand your process and your learning.

Using your design

A dog-eared production design is a good design. When it comes to the submission of your plan post-production, there is no criterion for neatness. What may have been a pristine document at the beginning should definitely show the wear and tear of the process by the time your production is completed. Be proud of that muddy footprint, the scribbled notes in the margin and the coffee stains over the script. These are signs that your production design has fulfilled its function; it has been the working document it was intended to be.

Use your design documents in rehearsal, on the shoot and in post-production. Your cast and crew will see your design documents as a symbol of your ownership and control as you demonstrate the construction of shots and instruct crew members about their duties. You will receive all manner of advice, some of it good, most of it bad. Listen. If the advice is worthwhile and you want to use it, amend your plan. If the advice is bad, wave your design in the air as a talisman, tell your well-meaning advisers that if it isn't in the plan, it isn't in the product, and get on with the realisation of your vision.



Abi Watson

Figure 2.24 It is clear that a great deal of planning went into Abi Watson's photographic shoot.

For more tips and tricks for designing and producing media productions, see Chapters 10, 11 and 12. These chapters are aimed at Year 12 students, but Year 11 students will find plenty of advice there too.

Disaster ... and genius

The production process is a time of intense hard work and creativity interspersed with moments of quiet reflection. A lot of learning will happen during the production and post-production stages as you work to bring your design to life. You will come to see possibilities that you were unaware of during the design process, and you will face challenges that must be met in order to meet the deadline.

In the realisation of your creative vision, two things are likely to happen:

- disaster
- genius.

Every media production the world over is a process of triumph over adversity. The trick is to hope for the former and plan for the latter. When – despite all your planning – disaster strikes, if you are in control of the production process and have retained a clear grasp of your vision, you will be able to find solutions. If, on the other hand, your production is sailing out of control and, for example, your star breaks his leg skiing or develops glandular fever and cannot finish the shoot, you will be less able to find your way through the seemingly insurmountable heap of problems this situation causes.

It is all about headspace. If you have organised everything possible and disaster strikes, you will have the headspace to work out a solution. You may have to make adjustments to your design. In the case mentioned above, you could shoot the finale with your actor sitting instead of walking. You could use a mid shot instead of a long shot, or shoot a silhouette against the light using a stand-in and voice-over. There are always solutions. If you have every other aspect of your production in control, you will be able to think of them.

What of genius? This moment, which happens for all students, is sublime. It is when you are, for example, out on a shoot and realise that if you move the camera slightly and wait for a few minutes, then the sun will shine down on your talent in such a way as to make them look as if God is controlling the light. You will need to amend your production design to explain the variations between your planned images and the final product, but what a pleasure it will be to demonstrate the depth of your control and engagement with your production through these amendments. Enjoy these moments, you deserve them!

Media production is the hardest thing you will ever undertake in school. It is also the best thing you will ever do! Careful planning, the maintenance of sound organisational practices and remembering why you chose Media – because you love it – will help you come away from the process with products of which you can be justifiably proud. I wish you fine weather for all your shoots. Good luck and enjoy!

Creativity is a wild mind and a disciplined eye.

Dorothy Parker, writer and critic

OUTCOME 1

On completion of this unit the student should be able to explain how media representations in a range of media products and forms, and from different periods of time, locations and contexts, are constructed, distributed, engaged with, consumed and read by audiences.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 1.

KEY KNOWLEDGE

- the nature of media representations within and across media products and forms, and from different periods of time, locations and contexts
- media codes and conventions that are used to construct media products and meanings in different media forms
- the construction of representations within and across products and forms from different periods of time, locations and contexts
- audience engagement with, and consumption and readings of media representations in different media products and forms from different periods of time, locations and contexts
- the construction of self, identity and others in media products and forms from different periods of time, locations and contexts
- the social and institutional relationships between audiences and the media that is created, produced, distributed, consumed and read
- media language.

KEY SKILLS

- describe the nature and form of representations within media products and forms from different periods of time, locations and contexts
- analyse the media codes and conventions used to construct media products and meanings in different media forms from different periods of time, locations and contexts
- compare the construction of representations within and across media products and forms from different periods of time, locations and contexts
- discuss how audiences engage with, and consume and read representations in media products and forms
- analyse the construction of the representations of self and identity in media products and forms from different periods of time, locations and contexts
- discuss the social and institutional factors influencing the distribution of and relationships between audiences and media representations
- use media language.

Area of Study Outcomes, Key Knowledge and Key Skills points are reproduced by permission from the VCE Media Study Design (2018–2022), © VCAA.

This chapter is about the theory and practice of media representation. Production tasks designed to develop the key knowledge and skills associated with this outcome are in Chapter 4.

WHAT IS 'REAL'? UNDERSTANDING OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MEDIA

Everyone knows that what happens on TV isn't real, don't they? Movies make us laugh, cry and look under the bed for monsters before we go to sleep, even though we know the characters we love and hate don't really exist, and nor do the monsters. Models look so cool in magazines, and we buy the beauty cream they promote well aware that we won't really end up looking like them. Newspapers are full of news that somehow seems just the same as yesterday's news, while commentators argue about the truth and audiences recognise that most of it is spin. On social media, everyone is always having an awesome time, but we realise that celebrities and our friends are constructing a version of their lives that they want

us to see. It can be hard to tell what is real and what is not, but we still love our media. Slipping into our favourite media experience makes us relax and feel good, like stepping into a warm bath.

What exactly is our relationship with the media? As an audience, we know so much of it is faked, yet every day we make the media a big part of our lives. We live our lives in its online communities, share our favourite media, cover our bedroom walls with it, study it and create it. Our lives are lived to media soundtracks and we often choose the media over other activities. Homework or Instagram? It's a no-brainer – socialising with the media is always more appealing!

The media is part of our lives and our culture. It tells us about ourselves and others, and takes us to worlds both real and imagined – places we want to go and places we hope we never get to see for real. We love the media and we also hate it, sometimes at the same time. It's awesome and scary, time-wasting and fun, relaxing and educational – and always there. Love it or hate it, we always want more!



Figure 3.1 A rose is just a rose, until it becomes a soft focus Instagram image.

Media reality is constructed

The media represents every aspect of life. Through these representations we, the audience, come to understand the world around us. Representing reality has been a goal of the media since its inception. Audiences know that the world the media presents to us on our screens, in print and through sound is constructed – that it is not 'real' in the sense that we experience and understand reality – but we also know that media representations have a lot to teach us about both real and imagined worlds, and that they are almost always entertaining.

It used to be said that the media was a window on the world. But if that were true, the world must be a pretty crazy place. Perhaps it is better to think of the media as a frame around the world, or a series of prisms or filters through which the world is magnified, enhanced or distorted – because the media does not reflect reality, it represents it. To test this idea, search Google Images for 'the world' and see what



you get. Think about how each search result represents the world differently. Now try the same with your favourite media personality. You are likely to find hundreds of carefully constructed images of that person but few, if any, representations of him or her that look real, whatever that is!

WHAT IS REPRESENTATION?

A **representation** is the deliberate media construction of an object, person, place or idea in which particular elements of reality are intentionally selected and emphasised over others to represent, or re-present, reality in order to suggest a meaning greater than or different from the original.

Representations are words, images, sounds or stories that stand for something else, such as ideas, people, groups, places, emotions or things. Representations say something about their subject beyond the literal meaning of words, images or sounds. A red rose, for example, may be just a flower – but it can also represent objects, ideas or emotions, including love, passion, sophistication, celebration, gardening, gratitude or winning in a reality TV show depending on the situation in which an audience finds it.

The media uses representations as a shorthand way of constructing and **denoting** meaning symbolically. Representations are especially useful for conveying complex thoughts, concepts and emotions.

Representations are constructed from:

- the subject that is being represented
- the opinions, ideology and values of the people creating the representation
- the purpose of the representation
- the opinions and values of the audience reading the representation
- the reaction of the audience to the representation
- the context of the society in which the representation is constructed and/or read.

Representations are a form of shared language or understanding between the media and audiences.

Shutterstock.com/Nina Anna



Shutterstock.com/Air Images

Figure 3.2 One of our earliest experiences of representation is understanding the meaning of dressing babies in gendered colours. Find and share gendered and non-gendered images of yourself as a baby.

The process of representation

The media represents – or re-presents – places, people, things, ideas and situations through a process of selection, omission and construction. Because it is not possible to depict the world in its complex entirety, the media:

- selects those essential elements it requires to convey a message
- ignores or omits those elements it considers unnecessary
- constructs representations for a particular audience and purpose.

Selection and omission

Representations are constructed through the selection of key parts or elements of the subject to be represented, and the omission of those elements that conflict with the message, are unimportant or distract the audience from it. Media producers make these selections and omissions with the audience and purpose of the media product in mind.

Construction

Representations are constructed to suit the audience and purpose of a media product. Look around your classroom. Imagine a TV crew is videotaping your class today. While they record for the duration of the class, they only plan to use two minutes of footage. What they select and how they edit it together (construct the segment) will depend on the purpose and audience of the program.

If the segment is a hard-hitting current affairs piece, 'a story that will shock anyone who has been to school' about teenagers and school, or a warm-hearted reflection on how education has changed for the better over the years, the selection and omission of footage will be very different. The producers will create positive or negative representations by selecting, omitting and editing footage to suit the intention of the segment. Look around your class right now. What could be used to construct a positive representation, and what could be used to construct a negative one? Without moving a thing, use your phone to shoot two images: one that creates a positive and one that creates a negative representation.

Activity 3.1 Constructing representations is easy

- 1 Write a paragraph about a family, beginning with: 'A family is ...'
- 2 Tell the person sitting next to you about teenagers.
- 3 Working in a small group, describe a typical school to your class.
- 4 Draw an image of love.
- 5 Use your camera phone to capture an image of work.

Each of the works you have created, whether written, verbal or visual, is a representation. You have not created or described actual families, teenagers, schools, love or work, although your representations may be based on real people, places or experiences. You have selected the features that you believe best represent people, places, things, ideas or experiences and constructed representations for an audience – in this case, your classmates.

Activity 3.2 Analysing common elements in representations

- 1 Analyse the representations you constructed in Activity 3.1 and write a list of the essential elements that you used to construct your representation of that subject.
- 2 Compare your lists with those of your classmates.
 - a Create master lists of the elements used to represent families, teenagers, schools, love and work. Which elements are common to everyone's lists?
 - b Look at the elements that only appeared once or twice. What can they tell you about the selection process for representation?
 - c Think about reality. What aspects of reality did you choose to omit from your representations? Why?

Activity 3.3 How does the media represent families, teenagers, schools, work or love?

Choose one category from Activity 3.1 and collect as many media representations of this subject as you can. Your representations can be in any media form, including visual representations (such as photographs and other images), text (including newspapers and other print media forms), representations in audiovisual media and representations from the internet. Bring these representations to the next class.

- 1 Examine each representation for common elements, add any new ones to the master list you created in Activity 3.2, and tick those you had already recognised.
- 2 How do the representations change between different media forms and texts?
- 3 How do the representations change for different audiences?

Activity 3.4 Media classes: bludge or hard work?

In small groups, decide how you want to represent your Media class to the rest of the school. Remember, how a representation is constructed depends on the intention of those making the representation.

Video or photograph your class over several minutes. Do not use sound – this is an exercise in visual representation. Do not disturb the class while you are working. What you capture and how you compose your shots will depend on whether your group has decided to produce a positive or a negative representation. Do not tell the class of your intentions.

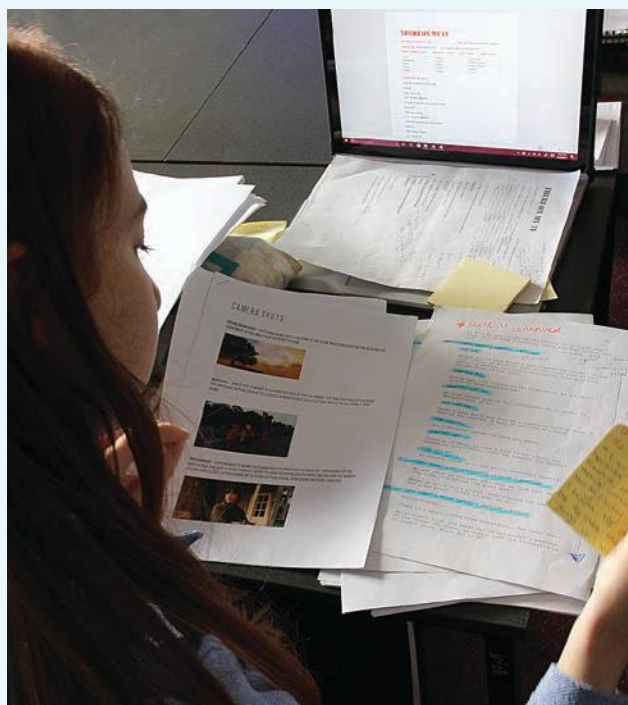
Show your footage or images to the class. The meaning of a representation depends on the person reading the representation, so let the class decide what your representation is trying to say.

Now answer the following questions:

- 1 Which aspects of the reality of your classroom did you choose to select and which did you choose to omit in your representation?
- 2 If you were to choose a soundtrack to accompany your footage or images, what would it be? How do you think a soundtrack would affect the meaning of your representation?

You may like to try this activity again, constructing a different representation from the same material.

Will the footage show students writing notes and asking questions? Do they raise their hands? Is there anyone doodling in their workbook? Are the students at the back paying attention? Do the boys have their shirts tucked in? It is easy to create both positive and negative representations of schools and students by selecting from footage shot over an entire lesson and editing it together appropriately. Dialogue and sound effects are simply an added bonus. Why not try it?



Texts are only representations but people process images as reality.

<http://mediaeducationlab.com>

REALISM

The nature of reality is at the heart of studying media representations. Media texts often strive for realism, but to debate whether or not a text is realistic is not very useful – depending on their point of view, audience members may hold differing opinions about what constitutes reality. If this idea seems a bit odd, think about a sports telecast: whether you are overjoyed or horrified by the way it is presented will depend on the team you support.

A sense of realism is embedded in most media texts. This realism may be literal or it may be symbolic and can take many forms. Realism may be considered as truthfulness, as in news reportage, or in terms of how true to life or realistic a text is. Realism may also be understood in terms of the relationship between the representations of reality in the text, real life, the purpose of the text and the ideological conditions of its creation. To analyse realism in media texts, Media students ask questions – who is the intended audience and what is the purpose of the text? They also ask how, why and by whom the text was created.

When Media students speak of ‘realism’, they do not necessarily mean that a text looks or sounds like real life. Anime can be realistic, as can musicals and computer games. Realism in media texts may be material or psychological. It seeks to naturalise the ways in which a text is constructed so that characters, events and ideas seem realistic to the target audience. Different audiences may make judgements about the realism of a text because they come to them with different values, beliefs and experience – one person’s view of *Grand Theft Auto* is of unending violence, while to another it is a game of skill.

The front page of a newspaper is assumed by most to contain the truth – to cover the news in an honest and realistic way. Readers consider magazines more or less realistic in their representation of their subjects, depending on the purpose and ideological basis of the text. *Time* magazine is generally considered a truthful, if ideologically conservative, magazine. *New Idea* is understood to be less realistic, because its purpose is to represent its subjects as entertainment for its readers.

Feature films and TV narratives commonly have a sense of realism at their centre. This realism may be apparent on screen as recognisable, if somewhat exaggerated, situations where characters do and say things that are familiar and logical to an audience, even if the audience does not have direct experience of the reality represented. Courtroom dramas or soapies are examples of this form of realism.

Realism may also be understood as symbolic, representing a universal truth through imaginative fictional characters, plots and locations, as was the case for Ripley in the *Alien* trilogy. The audience recognises that Ripley's struggle against the alien, while not 'real' in the sense we commonly understand reality, was nevertheless real in the sense that her struggle was one of an individual against the dangers of corporate evil. Similarly, animations such as *The Lion King*, *My Neighbor Totoro* and *The Simpsons* are not literally but symbolically realistic.

Realism is a kind of pact between media makers and their audiences; we pretend that what we see, hear or listen to is 'real' in the sense that we understand its meaning. We do this because media texts are based on a shared understanding between producers and audiences about the ways stories unfold and characters would and should act. This understanding is based on our shared **values**. That is why in media texts, good usually wins over evil and love so often conquers all.

It may seem strange that there is no one single true reality in media representations, but when we consider the many steps between reality and its representation in a media text – a process called 'mediation' – multiple meanings begin to make sense. Everything that appears in the media has been altered by the process of mediation, which therefore influences the ways in which audiences understand the world around them.

Mediation

The process through which reality is reconstructed by media creators and institutions into representations is termed **mediation**.

Mediation includes the process of constructing representations as well as the contexts in which representations are created. The media form itself mediates the nature of representation. Representations created for radio or newspapers are very different from those designed for television. Contextual factors include where, when and for whom the representation is constructed and the practices of the media institutions creating them.

A cricket match at the MCG, for example, is a very different event from the same match broadcast on TV. Mediation alters audience perceptions about the reality of cricket by enhancing aspects of the game that audiences would not otherwise be able to see or hear; for example, stump cam and slow-motion replay – production techniques that become part of the representation of cricket. Today's audiences do not think of cricket as a game played far away in the middle of an oval, but as a fast-paced close-up spectacle. For cricket fans, both realities are true.



Figure 3.3 Cricket becomes a very different game when mediated through the use of long lenses.

Representations express a point of view

Every time someone points a camera or microphone at a subject, they are expressing a point of view. Photographers don't just shoot randomly, videographers have a purpose in mind when they frame a shot, and journalists search for the 'truth'. All construct their version of reality through the way they represent their subjects.

Examine your own family's photos. Everyone is smiling. The family members who took these shots have constructed representations of happy families. It is rare to find crying children or tantrums in family photo albums. Why is it that every family photographs their weddings but no-one photographs funerals? What does this tell us about how we want to represent our family?

Family photos are representations; they express a point of view about family. The media works in the same way. A news crew attending the scene of an accident will video footage that reveals the extent of the damage, rather than cars that were not damaged. Lucky escapes make less 'newsworthy' footage. Politicians are almost always represented in the media as good or bad figures, not as busy people getting on with a day's work. Newspapers generally give us the bad news, when much of it could just as easily be constructed as good. Look at these two headlines. They could be used for the same article. Which one will the press choose, and why?

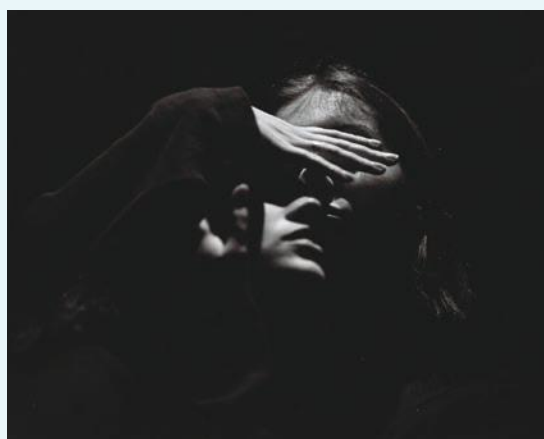


The examples described reveal the point of view of the person or media organisation constructing the representation. In your own VCE Media productions, you will express a point of view. Each production element and every stage in the production process will see you consciously select and construct your subjects to represent your point of view.

Activity 3.5 Whose point of view?

In selecting his models, and then posing, lighting and framing them, photographer Archie McGill engaged in a process of selection and construction of his subjects. The creation of this image also included **cropping** the image and controlling the tone of the image to represent his point of view. In allowing this image to be published, Archie has relinquished sole claim to its meaning. It is up to you to work out what the image means.

What do you think this image represents? Try to come up with a range of possibilities. Note your reasons and discuss them with your classmates.



Archie McGill

READING REPRESENTATIONS

The meanings of representations are cultural; that is, they are understood by both the creators of the representation and the audience reading them. Both groups have a shared understanding of the culture in which a media product is created and consumed.

Media messages are **polysemic**; that is, they have more than one potential set of meanings. An audience is invited to share the points of view expressed in a representation through the way the representation is structured and how the representation positions its audience. Audiences may choose to accept the preferred meaning of a representation, to negotiate a meaning or to reject the intended meaning of the representation and create their own. When *A Current Affair* advertises a 'story no parent should miss', they are positioning the target audience, mainly parents, to be alarmed. An audience watching an ad may choose to accept the representation of the characters in the ad as funny, or reject these representations as ridiculous. When you log on to a newspaper website, it is constructed to appear authoritative and trustworthy, while your friends' Facebook pages may be constructed so that you think of them as fun-loving larrikins.

Representations appear natural

While most audiences agree that what they see in the media isn't real in the way they experience and understand reality, representations still appear real, natural, sensible – the 'way things are'. This is because the elements used to construct representations are recognisable from our daily lives and experience, and because these elements are repeated over and over again in different media forms and texts.

Over time, representations gradually naturalise; that is, they come to be seen as normal. If something is repeated often enough, we as the audience begin to believe that it is real. Try not to think of this process as manipulation (although some texts do try to manipulate audiences) but the cumulative effect of the **codes** and **conventions** used to construct media representations combined with the fact that the creators of the representation share the same culture and **ideology** as the audience.

Media codes are the signs that the media uses to communicate meaning. A code for the environment, for example, is green. The media uses the word 'green', advertisers construct ads that feature green grass and trees, and audiences understand the many meanings other than colour that the term 'green' represents.

Media conventions are the ways in which signs are combined that are particular to media forms or text types. For example, the **masthead** of a magazine conventionally appears at the top of the cover. Magazine readers unconsciously look for it in the same place every time.

Ideology or ideologies are the set of beliefs and values that an individual, group or society holds about the nature of the world and society. When the majority of people within a society hold the same values, these beliefs are termed a 'dominant ideology'.

A teddy bear is a teddy bear, isn't it?

When you think about a teddy bear, what comes to mind? You probably picture your own favourite bear. Perhaps words such as 'soft', 'cuddly' or 'brown' come to mind. You may experience a flash of a memory about when a teddy was important, comforting or familiar.

The media understands this. If they want to use a teddy bear to represent an idea, they research what a teddy means to the target audience and **reference** that in the representation. How a teddy is constructed as a representation and what this representation means will depend on the intention of the text in which it appears and the associations an audience might bring to the representation. For example:

- To you, a teddy bear might represent a warm and safe part of your childhood and, recognising this, an advertiser might use one as a prop in an ad for a product that seeks to capture these emotions.
- To an audience of grandparents, a teddy might represent the innocence of times past, something they want to recreate with their grandchildren.
- Looking for a new market, toy manufacturers might represent teddy bears as hip new accessories (complete with their own website) for children who are into computer games.

For each representation, the audience is guided to associate different emotions, times, places and institutions with just one object: a small, furry stuffed toy.

Activity 3.6 There's a bear in there ...

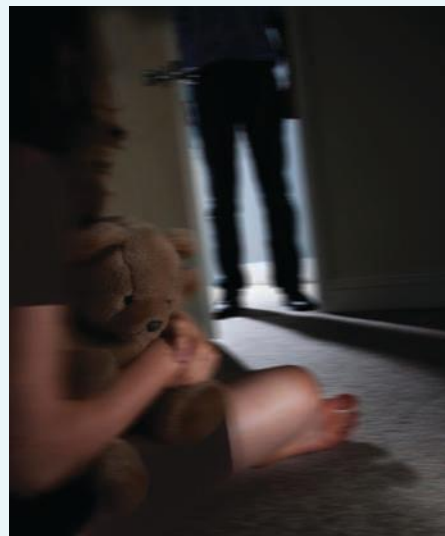
Look at the ways each of the media texts below has used a teddy bear to suggest meaning. While there is a bear in each image, the meaning suggested by each representation is quite different. Use the analytical guide outlined on page 18 to **deconstruct** each image and analyse how the codes and conventions used in each image construct a representation that can be read by audiences.



Alamy Stock Photo/AF archive



Alamy Stock Photo/Disney Pixar/Entertainment Pictures



Alamy Stock Photo/Robin Beckham / BEEPstock

CODES AND CONVENTIONS CONSTRUCT MEANING

Representations communicate meaning through the use of codes and conventions. Representations rely on a shared understanding of the codes and conventions that are used to construct them.

Codes and conventions are a kind of shorthand that represent people, places, events, ideas, products and values. Like much of the media, codes and conventions seem natural – so logical that you are probably wondering why they are worth studying. After all, they are easy for anyone around the world to understand, right? Wrong. Media codes and conventions, like the language we speak, are products of the culture in which a media text is created. They are constructions. Media students deconstruct the codes and conventions in representations to determine how they suggest meaning and the values upon which they are based. To do this, they ask themselves four questions:

- What do we see, hear or read?
- How has it been constructed?
- Why has it been constructed in this way?
- What is the effect on the audience?

Each media form has its own particular codes and conventions that audiences learn through experience. Over the years, as they move from *Play School* to *Orange Is the New Black* or from *Minecraft* to *Grand Theft Auto*, audiences gradually build a sophisticated set of tools with which to interpret the meaning of media representations. As media consumers with over a decade-and-a-half of experience, you share a detailed understanding of the meaning of media codes and conventions, which your work for the activities in this textbook has already demonstrated.



NewsPix/Stephen Cooper

Figure 3.4 Viewers understand the codes that suggest meaning in media texts.

Some principles of media representation

- The media uses technical and symbolic media codes and conventions to construct meaning in each text.
- Each media form has its own codes and conventions.
- Media forms borrow codes and conventions from each other and from society.
- Audiences create meaning by reading, interpreting and understanding the codes and conventions in texts.
- Media codes and conventions have a history, they develop and can change over time.
- Codes and conventions are not natural but cultural, although globalisation of media production and distribution means that they are increasingly universally understood.

Often the terms 'codes' and 'conventions' are used interchangeably; indeed, it can sometimes be difficult to determine the difference between them. In practice, it usually doesn't matter, but let's define them anyway.

Media codes

A code is a rule-governed system of signs, whose rules and conventions are shared amongst members of a culture, and which is used to generate and circulate meanings in and for that culture.

John Fiske, *Television Culture*, 1987

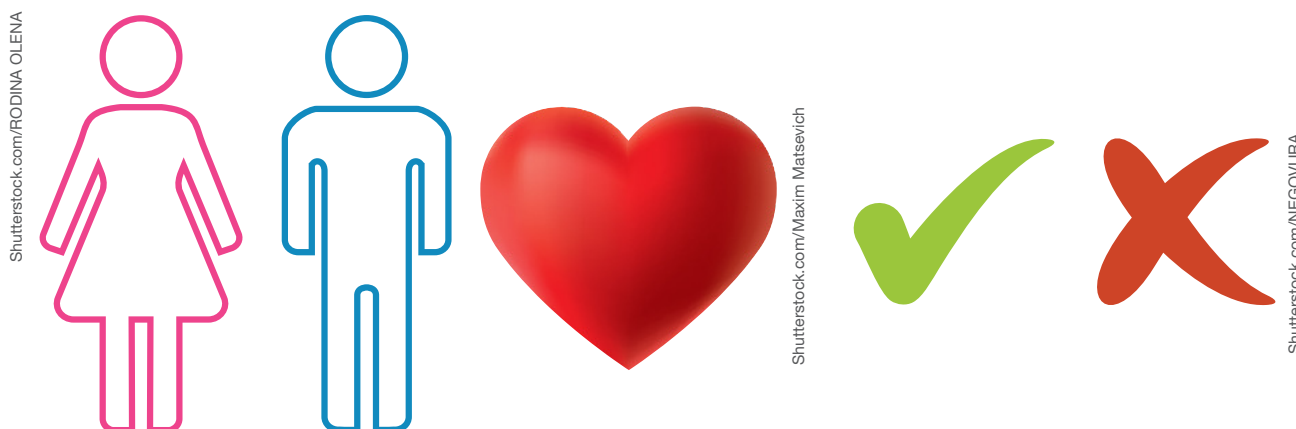


Figure 3.5 Some codes are simple constructions and easy to understand.

A code consists of:

- a set of signs that carry meaning
- a set of agreed rules for combining those signs together.

Put simply, a code is a system of signs or symbols that are used to communicate meaning.

All media texts in every form are constructed using codes. The construction of media codes is expressed using a range of media conventions.

Codes can be as simple as a colour (think about what the word 'blue' might represent) or as complex as the rules for a computer simulation. Sounds are often used as codes. In most schools, for example, a bell will sound to signify the end of class. Even if this doesn't happen at your school, your experience of watching TV and film texts about schools allows you to read the meaning of this code when you hear it.

Codes can be described as technical, written or symbolic

Technical codes include production techniques, such as camera framing, depth of field, lighting, mise en scène, exposure, sound design, editing and special effects, page layout, typography, colour, text, graphics and the choice of paper stock. A low camera angle symbolises power, as can the use of a bold font. A screeching violin soundtrack might be used to symbolise the arrival of a bad guy, so can low-key lighting. Black-and-white photographic images are often used to symbolise sophistication, as does the use of white or negative space in a magazine.

Activity 3.7 Shot types are technical codes

On page 409 is an illustration of the common shot types used in film. Create a storyboard that illustrates these shot types and use the storyboard to create a still or video example of each. Label your shots and provide an example of where they might be used effectively to construct meaning.

Symbolic codes refer to elements such as objects, settings, acting, costume, props, graphics and colours that are used to symbolically represent something else. A waterfall can be a symbol of purity; a raised eyebrow might mean one character does not trust another; the colour green is often used to symbolise care for the environment; and someone wearing glasses is usually a nerd.

Activity 3.8 Symbolic fun 101

Here are some familiar symbolic codes. Can you identify what they might suggest? A character will not meet the gaze of another. A femme fatale slowly lights a cigarette. A wave washes onto a beach. A crucifix hangs above a character's bed. A tear slowly courses down the face of a character in an anime. A candle is extinguished. Wind whistles in the trees. The sun rises. A croissant and coffee sit on a table. Fireworks erupt in the sky. A colour photograph is highly saturated. A gamer assumes the personality of an avatar. Comic sans is used in a print production.

Each example is a symbolic code selected to represent something – perhaps an idea, action, feeling, character, time, place, genre or style. Each has many possible symbolic meanings. As the reader, you decide what each symbol means in a media text.

- 1 Identify possible meanings of each of the symbolic codes above. Share your results with your classmates. How many different meanings did you identify? Why do you think that some symbols have more than one possible meaning?
- 2 For each of the symbolic codes, see if you can collect examples from media texts. How many representations that use these codes can your classmates find?
- 3 Choose one or more of the codes above and create a short script, page or image that uses the code to represent something – a person, idea, place, event or feeling. Share your work with your classmates. Can they identify the meaning in your symbolism?

Written codes include all aspects of written content, including copy or text (the words), headlines, captions, speech bubbles and language style. In a newspaper headline, the word 'disaster' suggests that the news is worse than bad. In social media, the use of the hashtag symbol has come to represent the main point of a post or image, such as #TGIF. Typographically, *Courier New* evokes a funky yet traditional typewriter feel, while *Curly M1* suggests playfulness.

Activity 3.9 Testing the power of typography

Choose one font that represents you, your personality and how you like to be seen in the world. Use imaging or word processing software to create a poster that represents you using only your name, chosen font and one colour. You can repeat, resize and arrange your name as often as you like. Get creative. Typography can be very powerful.

Codes are contextual

Media codes may construct different meanings, depending on the context in which they are created, the purpose of the representation and text, and the context in which they are read by audiences.

Media products are created and distributed for a particular purpose. However, audiences may consume the product in an entirely different context. It is one thing to look at a horror film with your friends during the day, but your reading of that film might be very different if you are home alone at night.

Think about all the possible meanings of the codes illustrated on page 62. Media codes can be complex – they may combine a range of simple codes, and when decoding meaning audiences may be required to rely on detailed knowledge of media texts, genre, society or the context in which the codes are being used. When a vampire is killed with a wooden stake, the audience does not need to be told why. Our knowledge of how to kill vampires is extensive. We learnt it from TV and film. We understand the code.

You are reading media codes right now. *Nelson Media* is constructed using many different technical, symbolic and written codes and conventions. To use this text, you first had to learn how to read English, a complex code in itself. Many years of using textbooks have taught you how they are laid out and how to find meaning in them – you understand the codes particular to each genre. Finally, this book contains examples of media texts from other media forms. Each one is also a complex code that made perfect sense in its original context but which, when included in this book, may have a very different meaning. The codes that the original producer of the text embedded in that text's construction are now being used for an entirely different purpose.

For more on the theory of signs as codes, see **Semiotics** on page 364.

Media conventions

Conventions are rules or patterns of construction that are common to each media form or style of media product. Conventions are found in every aspect of a media production. They provide a framework for the construction of media texts, and allow an audience to understand the general structure of text types. In TV advertising, for example, it is conventional that the product name, tag line and logo will feature prominently, usually at the end of an ad. This convention is understood by the producers of ads and by audiences. If we are interested in a product, we know to pay particular attention to the last few seconds. Even if you only catch the words 'Oh what a feeling', you know that you have consumed an ad for Toyota.

Like codes, media conventions are short cuts to meaning. Media conventions include story principles, form and structure, generic structures, character and story arcs, cause and effect, point of view, the structuring of time, elements of page layout, the selection of paper stock, titles and credits sequences, hyperlinking and the mounting and framing of images. Examples of media conventions include:

- the foreshortening of time in a TV program, so that the narrative is introduced, developed and resolved in 50 minutes
- the use of cliffhanger endings in soap operas
- bold text and a large font in a newspaper headline to indicate the importance of a story
- a TV presenter farewelling an audience with the words 'Goodnight and see you tomorrow'.

The meaning of media codes and conventions is dependent on the media form, genre and style of a product as well as the contexts of its production, distribution and/or consumption.

Consider the use of black and white in the image here. Photographers create black-and-white photographic images to represent many different ideas. This technique could be used as a code for sophistication, to represent an image as art, to suggest the subject is serious or to evoke times past. What do you think this image is trying to say?



Getty Images/Thomas Lim/EyeEm

THE CONSTRUCTION OF REPRESENTATIONS

Each media form, and the texts within that form, represents reality differently because of the ways in which they are constructed.

Media representations may be analysed in terms of:

- vision – what we see
- sound – what we hear
- print – what we read
- association – the meanings we bring to what we see, hear and read.

Representations can be simple or multilayered

Look at the images in Figure 3.6. Both are representations of the same emotions constructed using symbolic and technical codes and conventions. One employs simple emoji representations in colour; the other is constructed using many more complex elements, including text, a monochrome colour scheme, body language, the use of selective focus and lighting to highlight the message in the tattoos. In both cases, audiences use their experience of reading media texts and an understanding of what each of the codes suggests when reading these representations.

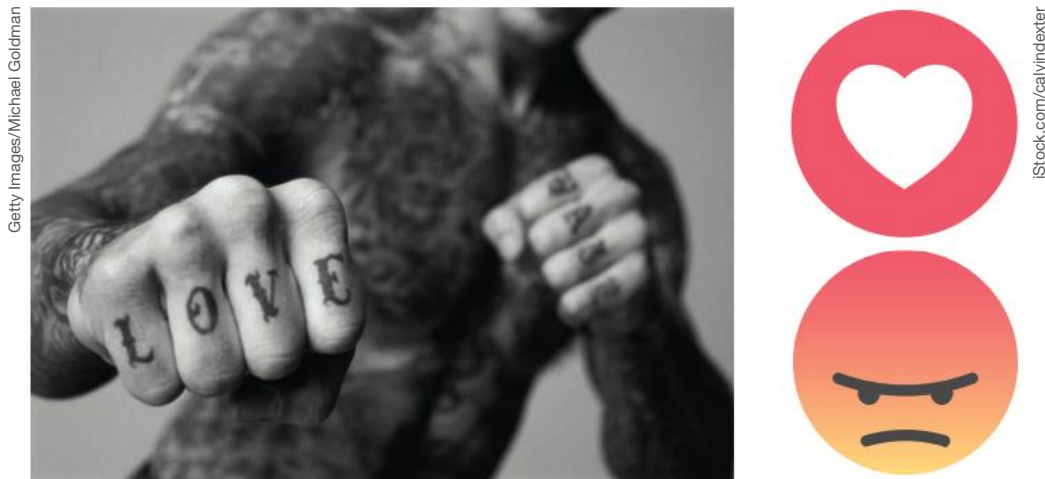


Figure 3.6 How would you represent love and hate?

Visual representations

Visual representations encompass still and moving images. Perhaps the easiest forms of representation to analyse are those contained in a single image: the photograph. Without movement and text, photographic representation is pared down to the elements of visual construction. The addition of text adds another layer of representation, and therefore possible meanings, through the choice of words combined with the selection, colour and placement of fonts. For moving images, the selection and construction of movement itself is part of the representation of a subject. Is the movement fluid or stilted, fast or slow, conveyed through one continuous shot or the editing together of a number of shots? Is the subject moving or is it the camera that moves? What does this suggest? Each element of construction is one of the building blocks in the creation of representations.

Art elements and design principles

Whether you are creating or analysing visual representations, it can be helpful to think about art elements and design principles. They provide the language to design, discuss, deconstruct and interpret each of the elements within the construction and organisation of representations.

Elements include point, line, colour, texture, tone, form, shape, sound, type, time and light.

Principles include emphasis (focal point), movement, rhythm, unity, variety, space, repetition, pattern, balance, contrast, cropping, hierarchy, proportion, space and scale. For more detail, see page 38.

Activity 3.10 Representing ideas

Collect examples of representations in the form of video stills and photographic images that employ art elements and design principles as dominant elements in the construction of meaning. Annotate one still and one image to illustrate how these elements and principles are evident in the image. Analyse how, when used alone or in conjunction with other features in the images, these elements and principles guide an audience's reading of the representations.

Colour as a symbolic code

Colour is to our eyes what music is to our ears. Colours evoke feelings and represent ideas. They are building blocks of media representation and one of the easiest symbolic codes to analyse.

Our psychological and emotional responses to colour are important and often culturally determined. Colours have meanings that are understood by most people within a culture. These codes or rules of meaning are mostly consistent between media forms and texts. As with all media codes, however, these rules may be broken and meaning can change over time.

Particular colours are associated with objects, people or ideas, and these associations can be both positive and negative. Colours may be described in terms of hue, shade, saturation, intensity, tone and the relative degree of brightness or contrast. Colours can be described as 'warm', 'neutral' or 'cool', terms that hint at their coded meaning.

Black can be powerful, depressing, mournful and heavy, but in the right circumstances it may be elegant, sophisticated or mysterious. Black may represent death or the dark side, or it can stand for wealth and privilege. Black is often used to indicate contrast.



White in Western cultures represents simplicity, cleanliness, purity, youth and innocence. Angels wear white, as do brides, babies and the medical profession – a doctor or nurse dressed in white can be trusted. A fade to white may represent an ascent to heaven or the beginning of a dream sequence. In print, white text on a coloured background is expensive and difficult to produce, and has therefore traditionally been reserved for representations of extremity.

Grey usually represents neutrality or conservatism. It may represent boredom, practicality, security or reliability – a grey suit may suggest a dull or unimaginative character. In black-and-white photography, however, the grey tones between black and white may mean something quite different. In this case, it is not the colour grey itself that represents something, but the range of tones in the image that suggests meaning.



Red is a passionate colour. It is the colour of fire and blood, and may represent energy, aggression, temper, war, danger, strength, power or determination, as well as desire and love. An emotionally intense colour, red also represents courage. It is a colour found on many national flags. The spectrum of reds is vast, with each colour within that spectrum evoking its own range of meanings, from the soft reds of a faded photograph to the visceral red of raw meat.



Blue is the colour of the sky and sea. It symbolises trust, loyalty, wisdom, confidence, intelligence, faith, truth and heaven. Blue can represent tranquillity and sincerity, or coldness and depression. Blue is associated with technological development – early hypertext was blue. Blue is also a masculine colour – Superman's costume is blue. Because there is no naturally occurring blue food, blue is rarely used to represent foods.





Yellow is the colour of sunshine. It is associated with joy, happiness, optimism and energy. Generally, yellow is used to represent bright and cheerful feelings, or childhood, although it can also represent cowardice or sickness.

Green is the colour of nature. It represents growth, harmony, freshness and fertility. Green indicates safety. It can also be used to represent money. Negative representations with which green is associated include inexperience, greed and jealousy. In recent years, the word 'green', as well as the colour, has come to represent concern for the environment.

Secondary colours often combine the characteristics of the primary colours from which they derive, but over time have also come to represent ideas of their own. Think of the different meanings of gold, purple, orange and beige.

The following slogan is the motto of the Color Marketing Group (CMG):

Color Sells ... and the 'Right' Colors Sell Better!

CMG predicts colour trends for companies to use when designing their products. It has predicted that by the time you read this textbook soft green and blue will reflect our world's environmental issues. Was it right? Check out next year's predictions on its website or social media sites.

Colour is so important as a representational tool that some companies have applied to copyright colours that represent their products. In 2004 Cadbury applied for copyright for nine shades of purple it claimed represented the Cadbury brand. Nestlé objected and the case saw Cadbury win and then lose the right to the exclusive use of Pantone colour 2685C (the familiar purple of its wrappers).



Weblink



Figure 3.7 Cadbury wanted to ensure exclusive commercial use of these colours.

Cadbury is not alone in its desire to control colours. Upmarket jeweller Tiffany & Co owns the particular blue known as 'Tiffany Blue', and closely guards the reputation of the Tiffany Blue Box® as a symbol of its business.

Colour management and colour matching are big business. In 1963 the first Pantone colour identifying, matching and communication system was created, and today Pantone is one of the most prominent colour-matching systems in the world. (Colour matching means that designers can ensure the colours they choose will look the same after printing.) Have a look at Pantone's resources and predictions for fashionable colours for next year on its website.



Weblink



Figure 3.8 Cadbury makes strong use of purple in its products.

Activity 3.11 Colour codes in media texts

Make a collection of media texts where colour is used symbolically in a range of different media forms: print, photography, TV, film and multimedia.

Think about the use of colours in these texts. How do they signify meaning? Don't forget, the way colours are used to represent meanings may change according to the target audience and purpose of each text.

Prepare an illustrated presentation, poster or essay that analyses the symbolic use of colour in the texts you have collected.



Figure 3.9 Photographer Hayley Miro makes strong use of colour in her work. What does this image represent to you?

Activity 3.12 Love is in the air

It is likely that you are working on this part of the VCE Media course in early February. If so, this is a wonderful opportunity to study representations of love. At other times of the year, you may have to try a little harder to collect resources.

- 1 Collect all the St Valentine's Day material and any other representations of love you can find: TV advertising, articles and images from newspapers, junk mail, classified ads, cards – everything. Photograph shop window displays and posters. Record TV specials. Check out stock photo sites on the internet. There are 70 000 images tagged 'love' on Shutterstock alone!
- 2 Based on this material, analyse the media codes and conventions that construct love. Look for technical, symbolic and written codes. Which colours are used? Are there any colours that are not used? Why do you think this is the case? What symbols are most used?
- 3 Use the material you have collected to create a poster or visual presentation with the title 'Love is ...'.



Reception theory

In the 1970s, British media theorist Stuart Hall devised a method for understanding the relationship between audiences and media texts. He termed it the 'encoding/decoding model' and it has come to be known as reception theory. Hall believed that media producers encode meaning in their products based on the society in which the media is produced and the purpose of the product but audiences may not decode the same meaning. Audiences may choose from the following readings:

- Preferred: the audience accepts the encoded meaning exactly as it was intended.
- Negotiated: the audience accepts parts of the message and rejects others.
- Oppositional: the audience understands the dominant reading, but based on their experience and values rejects the intended meaning and creates their own based on their beliefs about the representations in the text.

Of these three readings of media representations, most audiences operate in the negotiated space. They accept parts of a text and reject others. Have a look at the images above. It is likely that, based on your experience, you will think that they are a true representation of some aspects of love but also see them as clichéd and not relevant to your experience. If this is the case, you will have negotiated a reading.

MEANING IS CREATED BY AUDIENCES

When the media create a text – whether it is a feature film or a video clip, a newspaper or an ad – they determine how they want the audience to interpret or read the text. Audiences are positioned to prefer this reading. An ad for Mac computers, for example, is designed to encourage the purchase of an Apple product, not any computer. The company's preferred reading is that audiences will think that Macs are 'a touch of genius' and that they 'just work'. It is up to the audience whether to accept this reading or to reject it in favour of an oppositional reading – perhaps that they want a computer but reject the representation of the brand as 'light years ahead'. When most people accept a meaning, it becomes the dominant reading.

Audiences understand the meanings of media products based on a range of factors, including their own views about society, their beliefs about the subject of the representation, their experience of the media and the opinions of their friends. Think about a televised political speech – whether you applaud or jeer will depend on your politics.

Media producers sometimes take a dominant reading of a product and manipulate it in order to change audience perception. Much government health advertising is based on this principle. For example, the Metro Trains Melbourne ‘Dumb Ways to Die’ campaign used social media and television to change its target market’s behaviour by getting them to laugh at the idiocy of characters who were not safe around trains.

With more than 65 million people pledging to be safe around trains and over 4 billion games played worldwide, it has become the most popular Australian advertising campaign of all time.

Check out the campaign by following the weblink. Does the campaign change your views about train safety? What representational strategies does it use to reach its target audience?



It's complicated: the relationship between the media and its audiences

It has been said that the media simply gives the audience what it wants, to gratify its needs and desires. But a quick look at a television guide, Netflix catalogue, social media feed or newspaper soon dispels that theory. Surely the audience doesn't want all of this?

Media students should always bear in mind that commercial media exists primarily to create profit for its owners. To do that, it has to deliver eyeballs to advertisers. Thus the media may not simply give the audience what it wants, media content also serves to bait the audience's attention. Media audiences choose content to be entertained, learn, socialise, stay up to date or simply to relax, but we also find ourselves consuming with no idea about how or why we got there. The representations that entice us often go unnoticed, but work nevertheless.

Much of what we see on the web is **clickbait**. We all recognise the hooks – ‘OMG, you won't believe what he did!’ or ‘7 reasons why you should wear sunscreen’ – but we click anyway. The text, form and placement of clickbait are media codes designed to encourage consumption. Traditional media has its own methods for tempting us with promos, headlines and the layout of magazine covers, much of it sensationalised or controversial, designed to entice prospective audiences. Online media is often designed to get readers to click through to or watch advertising content. Audience attention is the goal for the media, and controversy and conflict are symbolic codes and conventions designed to sell audiences to advertisers.



In a Complicated Relationship with the media

The audience's attention is the coveted product that media deliver to advertisers. And to keep our attention, media must entertain us.

Victor Pickard, University of Pennsylvania, The Annenberg School for Communication

Why do we click?

In his *Wired* article ‘You'll be outraged at how easy it was to get you to click on this headline’, Bryan Gardiner explains how clickbait is codified to represent pleasure, something all audiences want. He even explains how audiences experience pleasure from outrage. We may not ask for much of the material we consume, but we certainly want it to be pleasurable. And next to the **listicle** or celebrity gossip? Advertising. The representations used to construct advertising are designed to target the consumer and are therefore especially appealing.

The term ‘clickbait’ is often used in a derogatory way, but is it necessarily a bad thing? Media is expensive to produce and distribute. To pay for it, we have two choices: pay up front or consume advertising. For most of us, it is a no-brainer – we choose advertising every time. It has been argued that clickbait is everything on the internet. Check out this site: The Time I Spent on a Commercial Whaling Ship Totally Changed My Perspective on the World.



Click on it and you can read *Moby Dick* in its entirety. Website ClickHole was trying to make a point that everything is clickbait and there is something for everyone on the internet.

Writers, photographers, musicians, filmmakers, celebrities, journalists, bloggers and teenagers in their bedrooms making videos or posting Instagram stories, together with the employees in the industries that support these creatives, all want one thing – an audience. For most, advertising will give it to them.

MEDIA CODES AND CONVENTIONS ARE CULTURALLY SPECIFIC

The symbolic codes in media representations may mean different things in different cultures. If you are a fan of kung-fu classics, manga or Bollywood films, you will be aware of this. Symbolic codes can be read very differently from those intended by the media producers. In Anglo-Australian culture, white represents innocence and purity, while black represents death. However, in other cultures, different colour codes represent these concepts.

The conventions involved in the construction of media products are also culturally specific. Log on to the United Nations website in English and Arabic to see these conventions in action. In English the site loads from left to right, while in Arabic it loads from right to left. While you are there, see if you can find any other culturally-specific representational codes and conventions.



Weblink

Activity 3.13 The internet in the non-English-speaking world

To test the idea that media codes and conventions are culturally specific, surf the internet looking for sites that are not in English. Try large multinational companies first – you will see how ‘Western’ (that is, culturally familiar) these sites appear, no matter what the language.

Begin with some of the following:

- Coca-Cola
- Adobe
- Samsung
- Disney.

When you feel confident that you can navigate sites that are not in English, try looking for sites that are intended for locals only. You will notice quite quickly that even the conventions of site layout and hyperlinking become very culturally specific. Try some of the following websites. What do the representations in these sites tell you about these organisations and the culture for which the websites were created?

- KDDI
- Naidunia
- Phosphore
- Museu do Futebol
- Aljazeera

Create a poster or annotated visual report that illustrates a range of representations that reveal cultural differences evident online.



Weblink

Codes and conventions may be media form, genre or text specific

In TV and film texts, representational codes include the techniques used for camera, acting, setting, mise en scène, including visual composition and the use of colour, editing, lighting, sound and special effects. The conventions of moving image representation include story principles, form and structure, generic structures, character and story arcs, cause and effect, point of view, the structuring of time, and title and credits sequences.

Film and television texts are often discussed in terms of **production values**; that is, the style, quality and expense of the production. High production values mean that representations in a text look professional and authentic. Low production values mean that the construction of representations may look cheap or tacky. Feature films and many television and streamed series tend to have high production values, while the kind of programs found on lesser channels or made for the internet often demonstrate low production values.

TV soaps and sitcoms share similar production values, but differ in some of the conventions with which they construct their narratives. Films may draw on similar subject matter but differ in their representation of these subjects. Some codes and conventions are common across media forms, while others are very media-specific. For example, the codes that tell audiences to laugh, cry or be alarmed can change according to genre.

In TV news, it is conventional for the newsreader to introduce each item, and for the remainder of the report to be constructed from a blend of vision, voice-over and interviews, concluding with the newsreader's summation. Audiences are familiar with the way this model constructs meaning, and read it as natural. They rarely think of news broadcasts as media constructions developed to represent the news. Try videotaping a news broadcast and then watching it with the sound turned down. Or, watch *Charlie Brooker's Screenwipe* on YouTube to see how media texts are constructed.

Some codes and conventions are common across most texts in a particular media form. In film, for example, an establishing shot is a convention that conveys location, a close-up indicates an increased level of emotion, the sound of unseen footsteps represents danger and music contributes to the meaning of a narrative.

In addition, each genre has its own codes and conventions, which the audience reads and responds to through its knowledge of that genre. A vulnerable character in a horror film always screams. In early Westerns, the good guys were clean-shaven and the bad guys wore black bandanas. The audience expects martial arts heroes to conquer hundreds of villains in every fight. Familiarity with the codes and conventions of a genre leaves the audience free to interact with those representations that are new or different in a text. To find out more about reading film and TV narratives in general, and genre in particular, see Chapters 6 and 9.



Alamy Stock Photo/Atlaspix

Figure 3.10 The 2016 film *The Conjuring 2* is built on audience recognition of familiar horror film tropes.

Activity 3.14 From page to screen

One way to learn how media codes and conventions differ between media forms – and the impact these differences might have on the construction of representations across media forms – is to try an exercise in translating from one form to another.

Below is the beginning of a short story. Read it through, then complete the tasks that follow.

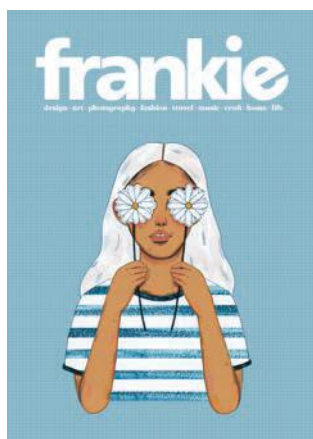
She had wondered for some time about his feelings for her. She had her doubts. After all, he was handsome, rich and popular. She, on the other hand, was fat, ugly and dumb. Well, that's what she thought anyway, and it didn't matter how many times her friends told her how beautiful she was, how many A+ grades her teachers gave her and the fact that her new jeans were a size 10; in her mind, she was useless. What would they know, she thought. They were just being charitable.

He often thought about how beautiful she was, and now the formal was approaching. He was trying to raise the cash to buy a ticket and the courage to ask her to accompany him. Sure, his dad was loaded, but he hadn't seen him for many years. His house was one of the best in the street, but very few knew the truth, that he often went to bed hungry. He had his pride, though, and his family troubles were nobody's business. But she seemed so aloof. How could he win over the ice queen?

- 1 Script and storyboard the excerpt above.
- 2 Compare your script and storyboard with those of your classmates. How did each of you represent the thoughts and opinions of each character for screen?

In the case of print products, media codes and conventions define the genre of the product through, for example, content, layout, style, colour, illustrations, photography, typography and paper stock. The conventions of print media can be seen by comparing a daily newspaper with a fashion magazine. Each deals with the same elements of construction, yet does so in an entirely different way. Just feeling the paper stock can reveal much about the ways in which print texts represent their subjects for their target audience. It is unlikely that *The Age* will go glossy or that *Cosmopolitan* will have a sports report and, although both have photographs, the style and purpose of these are very different.

Bauer Media Group



frankie press



Getty Images/Simon Bruty / Sports Illustrated



AAP/Nadav Kander for Time Magazine via AP

Activity 3.15 Codes and conventions in print texts

Each of the magazine covers shown above is designed for a different market. While they share the conventions common to magazine covers – including the use of a masthead, images, cover lines and layout – the text, typography and images on each cover represents the subject matter of the magazine for a specific target market by employing media codes designed to appeal to that market.

From the covers alone, identify the target market for each magazine.

Write notes about the media codes you identified that have been used to appeal to the target markets under the following headings:

- Technical codes
- Symbolic codes
- Written codes.



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Codes and conventions change quickly in online texts. The use of underlined text to indicate a hyperlink, for example, is much less common today than it was 10 years ago. To see how your favourite website has changed, search using the Wayback Machine. Digital and online media are developing increasingly sophisticated conventions particular to each genre, purpose and audience. A website designed to sell a product is very different from the one your school uses to promote itself.

Social media platforms are designed for the publication of user-generated content and allow for creativity, but this creativity must be contained within the codes and conventions of the site itself. These include, for example, restrictions on representations of particular subjects on Facebook, the aspect ratios of images on Instagram and the number of characters on Twitter.

All major daily newspapers have a website. These sites display news and features appearing in the print edition, as well as features that can only be accessed online, including breaking news, video coverage and an archive service. The market for the online version of a newspaper is varied, ranging from regular readers of the print version to overseas readers, those who haven't the time to read a print version or haven't bought one that day, and researchers. To maximise readership, there are significant differences between the ways news is represented in online and print newspapers, although this is changing as print editions choose to employ some of the codes and conventions of their online versions, such as listicles, while what is termed **long-form journalism**, extensive articles incorporating multimedia features, are now becoming a feature on quality newspaper sites. For more on the changes in news in recent years, see Chapter 8.

Activity 3.16 Comparing news representations

Compare the print copy of a daily newspaper with an online version. For example:

- *Herald Sun*
 - *The Age*
 - *The Australian*.
- 1 Identify the similarities and differences in the ways each represents the newspaper itself, and the news and features it contains. Note the differences in the use of codes and conventions, including layout, colour, the length and form of articles and types of advertising.
 - 2 What can you say about the ways in which news is represented in print and online?
 - 3 Can you identify any differences in the target market of the print and online versions?

MEDIA CODES AND CONVENTIONS CHANGE OVER TIME

Media codes and conventions are not static, they change over time. Some become more complex as audience sophistication increases, while others alter in line with changes in community values. The extreme slow motion first used as a code to represent power in the fights between superheroes movies in the 1970s developed into ‘bullet time’ in the 1990s and is used today to deliberately pause the flow of action, allowing the audience time to reflect on what they are seeing. The meaning and impact of this technical code has evolved over the years as audience understanding of film construction builds on the knowledge of what has come before to become ever more sophisticated.

Representations change to match changing values. Characters in feature films of the 1930s were often referred to as ‘gay’, meaning happy-go-lucky. In the latter part of the 20th century, the term came to stand for a pejorative or humorous representation of homosexuality. Today, the term ‘gay’ stands for a range of entirely different representations, positive or negative, depending on the audience and purpose of the text. Of course, the commercial nature of the media means that when an idea becomes accepted in society, representations of that subject are likely to become positive. This has certainly been the case in media representations of gay characters. We will finally know when society completely accepts homosexuality when characters in popular media texts are no longer defined by their sexual orientation, they are simply part of the narrative.

Media codes and conventions are built on those that have come before, often from earlier technologies. As we read text from left to right, it is of little surprise that we read screens similarly. Thus it is a convention that important characters are positioned on the left-hand side of the screen looking forward into the future, which, for an audience, is represented by the right-hand side of the screen. Of course, like all conventions, this one is often broken, particularly for effect. Start looking for the conventions of character placement on screen and you will be surprised by how many similar examples you see.

Such conventions also explain why very early martial arts films can be difficult to follow. It is not just bad acting and poor subtitling; many were made for audiences that did not have a cultural convention of left-to-right storytelling, and so Western audiences found it difficult to follow the flow of the narrative. Modern films are made with a global audience in mind and, as most profits are to be found in Western markets, it is Western conventions that have come to dominate the production conventions of Asian cinema.



Alamy Stock Photo/SilverScreen

Figure 3.11 Characters in 1930s feature films were often referred to as ‘gay’.



Figure 3.12 When you see these symbols, what do they signify to you?

Activity 3.17 Changing times, changing representations

Choose a subject, group or idea for which media representations have changed over the years. Some suggestions include:

- men and/or women
- children
- the unemployed
- racial inequality
- the environment
- driving under the influence
- cigarette smoking.

Conduct some research to find out what society's views were, and find media representations that illustrate changes in the way this subject, group or idea has been portrayed over time. Create a poster or report that illustrates how media representations reflect changing community beliefs.

Digital metaphors

For most of us, our understanding of the digital world is almost entirely based on a series of representations that describe what we do with technology. We may not understand how these technologies work, so we think and speak about them in digital metaphors. We keep our files in 'folders', send and receive 'mail', use Word to 'write' essays, Photoshop images, 'text' or 'like' our friends, update our 'status', and consign the digital items we don't want to the 'trash'. This is normal, and we do not think about these activities as representations. But they are. The term 'mail' has come to mean something very different from items in a letterbox and, like so many digital representations, it has its own icon, loosely based on an earlier meaning, symbolising this change.

Many digital technologies come and go (remember Vine?), but some symbolic codes remain, even if they are hopelessly out of date. You know what the symbol on the left represents, but do you know what it is?

New media codes and conventions arise as they are needed. Consider the codes and conventions of SMS and instant messaging, both of which were unimaginable only a few years ago. All computer gamers are aware that the codes and conventions of games such as *NBA* and *Mass Effect* are light years away from the clunky representations in *Pac-Man*.

Technology in combination with the convergence and hybridisation of media forms, including film, animation and games, has driven the development of new codes and conventions in video games. Once, representations in games were restricted to goodies and baddies. Today, games have complex social and political worlds, and characters are constructed with a range of personalities and motivations that *Pac-Man* could only have dreamed of.

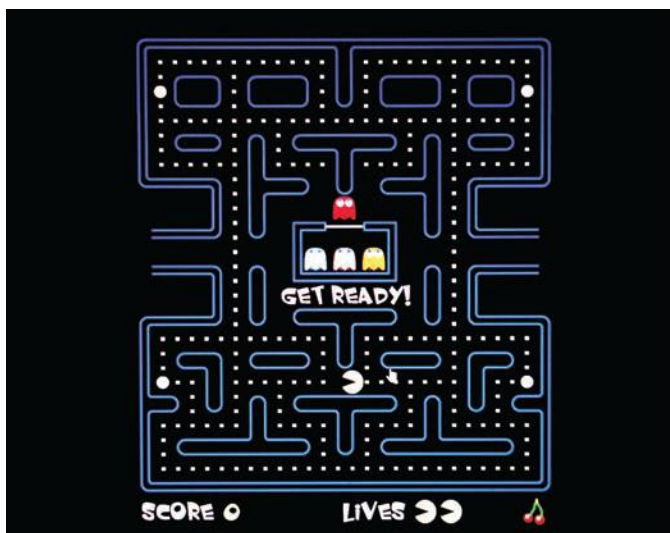


Figure 3.13 Representations in games have certainly changed.



Activity 3.18 New media metaphors

The impact of digital technologies has meant that many of the media codes and conventions you use have been created in just the last few years. These codes may seem natural to you, but to an older audience they are almost a foreign language.

Select a media form, technology or text that an older member of your family knows little about. Suggestions include video games, a new social media platform or digital photo enhancement. Organise an hour or two where you introduce this family member to the form, technology or text. Encourage them to play with it and learn how it works. You may like to video the session.

Make notes about the difficulties your relative has in understanding the media form or text you are trying to teach them. These difficulties are likely to be the result of not understanding the technical and symbolic codes and conventions that construct representations of the form, technology or text.

- 1 Write a report that analyses your relative's experiences. Note what they could and couldn't do and evaluate the reasons for this.
- 2 Compare your experiences with those of your classmates.
 - a What were the common difficulties the relatives experienced? In what ways might they overcome them?
 - b How likely is it that the older people in your study will learn to manage the difficulties they experienced and become competent in this technological form?
 - c What can you conclude about the impact of new technologies on older audiences?

Representations reveal our values

Values are the principles that underpin our beliefs and actions. They are the unwritten rules by which society lives. Audiences like to see their values represented in the media texts they consume. Look at the television programs you enjoy, your Facebook and Instagram feeds, the games you play with your friends and the films you like. Chances are that they are full of representations of your values.

Representations in media texts often take the form of literal representations of values. Sitcoms show us that family is the most important unit in society, news stories demonstrate that bad guys get punished and social media is filled with images of happy people. Representations of values are also constructed symbolically. If you are into first-person shooter games, the representations can be pretty gory, but this doesn't mean that you value death and destruction; rather, that you value competition and the struggle to win against the odds. Humblebragging can be a form of symbolic representation where irony indicates that the person is actually proud of their achievements.

Analysing representations in media texts can reveal much about the values and ideology of the society in which these texts are created, and the values of the audiences that consume them. The more popular a text is, the more we can be sure that they represent the dominant values of the society in which they are popular. You can test this out by looking at television **ratings**. OzTAM publishes the top 20 television programs in Australia each week. They are almost always a mix of news, sport and family viewing in the form of reality TV, such as home renovation, cooking or dating shows. What does this reveal about the values of contemporary Australian society?

Of course, television cannot exist without advertising, and the ads screened during high-rating television programs are also full of representations of the values of their audiences. Deconstructing and analysing ads will reveal much about Australian values. After all, the purpose of ads is to sell products, so they are going to be constructed using representations of the values of the market they are aiming for.

The long-running advertising campaigns for lamb are a popular example. Over the years, consistent themes have been Aussie culture, multiculturalism and community. The 2017 ad pulled out all stops, gathering every community and cultural group they could find to celebrate a lamb barbecue with the tag line 'You never lamb alone'. It was screened during peak family viewing times and has been seen by nearly a million people online. Deconstructing this ad reveals much about contemporary Australian values. You can find it at We Love Our Lamb. It is also interesting to compare this ad with early ads for Australian lamb. Search online for 'Lamb, the multicultural meal'. It is also worth searching for 'Australia Day lamb ad' to see the progress of this series over the years.



Weblink



Figure 3.14 'What's the best thing about diversity? Everything! So let's all unite with the meat that doesn't discriminate – Lamb. Because You Never Lamb Alone.' #unitedwelamb

Activity 3.19 Multicultural values on screen: analysing 'You never lamb alone'

Watch this ad several times, noting down all the representations of diversity you can find. Use screen capture to select stills that demonstrate visual representations and make notes about how the script represents the message through the use of puns and word play.

Once you are sure that you have identified all representations, begin analysing the technical and symbolic codes and conventions that have been used to construct diversity and to suggest how the audience should read representations in the text. Annotate your screen captures and notes to identify the codes and conventions used to construct representations, don't forget to analyse how camera movement and sound are used too. Create an analysis of the ad that demonstrates your learning.

Activity 3.20 The relationship between TV programs, values and representations

Working in a group, choose a top-rating television program. Divide the program into workable segments to analyse:

- title sequence
- opening
- development
- resolution and closure
- advertisements.

Use the following guide to help you analyse the representations in the text:

- 1 What do audiences see, hear and read?
- 2 How is the text constructed using technical and symbolic codes and conventions?
- 3 Why did the producer structure the representations in this way?
- 4 What is the effect of these representations on the audience?

Create an illustrated presentation on the representations you have analysed.

STEREOTYPES, COUNTERTYPES, ARCHETYPES AND TROPES

The media uses a range of short-cut techniques that its audiences understand to create meaning without having to spell it out each time. These are often in the form of **stereotypes**, **countertypes**, **archetypes** and **tropes**.

Stereotypes

The world is a complex place, and in order to make sense of this complexity we create stereotypes; that is, oversimplified and standardised representations to describe a group of people, things or ideas. This representational shorthand allows us to create imaginary groups, all members of which are thought to share similar characteristics. Over time, stereotypes come to be seen as natural, the way things are. The problem with stereotypes is that they oversimplify the groups they describe, and it is just a short step from simplification to negative prescription. Most stereotypes are negative.

Activity 3.21 Let's do some stereotyping

Complete these statements and then answer the questions that follow:

- Teenagers are ...
 - Rap musicians always ...
 - Women should ...
 - Americans believe ...
 - Hipsters are ...
 - Politicians are motivated by ...
 - In Kenya, everyone ...
 - The suburbs are ...
 - Old people wish ...
 - Fat people are ...
 - Nice houses have ...
 - Computer gamers are ...
 - Teachers always ...
- 1 How many of your statements were positive and how many were negative?
 - 2 Why do you think it is so easy to come up with stereotypes?
 - 3 It is likely that there were differences between your statements about the groups you know and those you don't. Which groups were easier to categorise? What does this suggest about stereotyping?

For the media and their audiences, stereotypes can be useful because they are an efficient communication tool. Whether in an ad, a TV drama or a video clip, a stereotype can save time. The producer and audience share an understanding of the symbolic codes and conventions that construct the stereotype and the meanings implied by it.

However, rather than simply describing a group, stereotyping may dumb down our understanding. What about those who do not fit the mould? Are they under pressure to fit in? What if they don't know they are being stereotyped? Stereotyping can mask or deny complexity and individuality for the sake of simplicity.

Activity 3.22 Video clips are built on stereotypes

Video clips are a highly stylised art form designed to sell an artist's message in only a few minutes. They use stereotypes as a major element of their visual and aural representations.

Search the internet to find video clips that are heavily stereotyped. Note the range and types of stereotypes that occur in these clips.

- 1 What groups and ideas are stereotyped?
 - 2 How is each of these groups represented?
 - 3 What visual and aural codes and conventions are used to construct the stereotypes?
 - 4 Evaluate the sense of realism evident in the stereotypes in video clips.
- Make a short video illustrating stereotypes that are common in the video clips you analysed.

Countertypes

Countertypes are positive stereotypes (and as stereotypes are generally negative, countertypes can be thought of as 'reverse stereotypes'). They exist to provide a positive message and are often described as token characters – although media producers would prefer to think of them as examples of what is possible.

Countertypes are common in films, television programs and games. Think about Ripley in the *Alien* trilogy, or Lisa Simpson. Countertypes can, however, be just as restrictive as the stereotypes they seek to replace. Must all members of the group being countertyped try to live up to the standard being imposed? Countertypes are still stereotypes, after all.

Activity 3.23 Stereotypes into countertypes

- 1 Sketch a stereotyped representation of one or more of the following characters: pilot, teacher, nurse, surgeon, computer technician, priest, gardener, biker, Meals on Wheels volunteer.
- 2 Share your representations with your classmates. Make notes about the characteristics of each representation under the following headings:
 - Age
 - Gender
 - Race
 - Religion
 - Costume
 - Props.
- 3 Now think about creating countertype characters. What would you change? Sketch your countertypes, and share your representations with your classmates.

Archetypes

Although not often used, the term 'archetype' is useful for describing those characters or things that are original or excellent examples of their type. Archetypal characters are those who exemplify perfection, whether good or bad. Archetypal baddies are dark, swarthy, untrustworthy, endlessly evil. Can you think of some archetypal goodies?

Tropes

A trope is a figure of speech or recurring storytelling pattern, plot device or overused storyline that represents ideas, plotlines or characters. Media makers and audiences share an understanding of the codes and conventions of the trope, so it does not have to be explained each time it is used. You will know many common media tropes, which include:

- dumb dads in TV programs
- heroes casually walking away from a massive explosion
- the reality show recap, 'Previously on ...'
- the maverick cop
- the vulnerable victim runs into a graveyard
- the innocent character opens a door not suspecting what is behind it
- the 'this is not what it looks like' line
- exaggeration or the use of turning the volume up to 11, a reference to the movie *This Is Spinal Tap* that appears often in advertising.



Alamy Stock Photo/Moviestore collection Ltd

Activity 3.24 Trope mashup

Choose your favourite film or TV genre and collect as many tropes as you can from texts in that genre. Create a poster, online presentation or video mashup that illustrates these tropes.



Shutterstock Premier/FremantleMedia/REX

Froth and bubbles

Soap operas originated in America in the 1930s. They were originally radio serials that broadcast during the day to an audience of housewives, and they were sponsored by large soap companies, which also advertised their products during the broadcasts. They were considered overly dramatic, and the combination of these two features resulted in the term 'soap opera'. The advent of television saw soap operas cross media to become a dominant TV form.

Representation in soap operas

Soap operas, or 'soapies', are a popular form of entertainment around the world. Long-running and relatively cheap to make, they enjoy a loyal audience. Soap operas generally conform to a limited number of textual and production codes and conventions in the form of well-worn tropes, such as a stranger comes to town, wedding dramas and cliffhangers. They are often accused of relying on stereotypes in their characterisation and plotlines.

Soap operas are **serials** (as opposed to **series**) – plotlines continue from one episode to the next with little narrative closure. They are constructed with multiple, overlapping **story arcs** and a stable of regular characters whose actions parallel real time.

Most soap operas are concerned with everyday life. Their domestic plotlines are dialogue-driven and set in the home or in places where characters talk to each other, such as schools, workplaces and coffee shops. Most dialogue revolves around problem-solving and relationships; action is limited to events that characters experience or can talk about.

Characters in soap operas are often stereotyped and are designed to appeal to a wide **target market**. Representations in soaps have changed over the years to match changing community values, although the genre does lean towards social conservatism. The roles of men and women in the home and workplace and the depiction of teenagers in society develop over time to reflect changes in the way society and young people – who are a major market for soap operas – see themselves.

Despite their stereotypical nature, it is a mistake to see soap opera characterisation as simple. The ongoing complexity of their relationships, together with audience knowledge of characters' back stories and current lives, constructs an intricate web with which audiences can engage, forming the basis of an understanding of and emotional investment in complex character motivations.

Female characters tend to be strong, independent and influential, both outside the home and within it. They are happy in their sexuality and enjoy the power afforded to them in domestic, community and work spheres.

Males are constructed as sensitive and thoughtful in order to fit in with the conversational focus of the genre. They are rarely dominant and are often rewarded for exhibiting nurturing and cooperative behaviour. Overtly masculine men may be structured as bad characters.

Soap operas are said to be popular because they are texts through which audiences can explore the complexities of modern life, testing their ideas against characters who (like them) are unlikely to ever achieve the perfect relationship, but who (like them) continue to struggle for this ideal. The importance of family is a continuing theme running through soaps. Families suffer the big hurdles of life as well as many small ones. It is family problems and crises that usually form major plot points in soap opera narratives.

The popularity of **hybrid media** text forms, such as docusoaps, reality TV and makeover shows, may be due in part to their similarity to soap operas. Indeed, these newer forms are constructed by combining the codes and conventions of soap opera with those of documentary and game shows. The popularity of programs such as *The Block*, *The Bachelor* and *MasterChef*, which all incorporate soap opera elements in their construction, demonstrates that they engage their audiences.

Activity 3.25 Not all froth and bubbles: soap opera stereotypes, countertypes, archetypes and tropes

Watch several episodes of a popular soapie and search its website and social media. Create lists of stereotypes, countertypes, archetypes and tropes.

Compare your lists with those of your classmates and, in small groups, create an online presentation that illustrates the stereotypes, countertypes, archetypes and tropes that are used to construct the program.

Based on your evidence, evaluate why you think these programs are so long-running and continue to be popular with audiences.



NewsPix/Stephen Cooper

CONSTRUCTED REALITIES: PHOTOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION

Photography is probably the most ubiquitous of all media forms. Everywhere we turn, we are surrounded by photographic images. Look around. Are there posters on the walls? How many images of your friends do you have on your phone and social media pages? Each photograph is a construction representing the reality of the photographer.

To a great extent, photographic images are the mark of our lives and culture. You may not be able to remember your first birthday, but you know all about it from the photographs your proud parents took. Disaster in another country? What you know is primarily constructed from images. In many cases, it can be difficult to distinguish reality from its construction because photographic images are considered to be truthful, even though we know they are composed.

There are so many ways we use photographic images in our lives that it can be difficult to know where to start. Photographs both record and construct places, events, people and emotions. During bushfires, it has been noted that at the moment of evacuation, people run into their houses to rescue their photos. If you had only a few minutes to rescue something from your home, what would it be? Ask your family the same question.

Activity 3.26 Just how many images are there in your life?

Choose one hour over the next 24 hours to keep a record of every photograph you see. You might like to use your phone to capture each image. Note the subject matter, location and purpose of each image. This will keep you very busy, so keep your notebook or phone close. Use this data to estimate how many photographic representations you see in a day. Combine your research with that of your classmates under the following headings:

- Total number of images per student
- Locations
- Most common subjects (include numbers for each category)
- Most common purposes (include numbers for each category)
- Number of professional images
- Number of amateur images.

Use the data you have collected to create an infographic that illustrates the uses and importance of photography in your world. If you have captured every image, make a photo **montage** of your findings.

One of the purposes of photography you will have identified in Activity 3.26 is to record important events in people's lives. Some families record every step in their children's development, filling album after album, their phone or digital folder after folder with day-to-day activities. Other families tend to record only major milestones, although the ubiquity of smartphones has seen us record more and more detail of our lives. In any case, the representations recorded by families is an interesting subject of research. What is included and what is not? Why?



Figure 3.15 Family snapshots. What can you say about the meaning of these images? What were the photographers trying to represent about these children and their lives?

Activity 3.27 What history does your family record?

- 1 Go through your family photos. Make notes about the following:
 - approximate number of images in total
 - number of images of you.
- 2 Families usually take more photos of the first-born child and fewer for each subsequent child. Is there a correlation between your place in the family and the number of images taken of you?
 - a List the occasions on which photographs were always taken.
 - b Describe the most common codes and conventions used to construct these representations.
 - c What is the proportion of formal to informal shots?
 - d What emotions are represented in the photos?
 - e What emotions or occasions are not represented? Why do you think this is the case?
- 3 Use this data to draw some conclusions. What image does your family project to itself and the world through the representations contained in your family photos?





- 4 Select a typical shot from your childhood, and also select the one that is the most unusual. Bring hard copies of these to school. Pin all the images to the classroom noticeboard (and, just for fun, display them anonymously – everyone can guess who is represented in each image). Use the images to answer the following questions:
- What are the most common codes and conventions used to construct images?
 - What does the use of these codes and conventions suggest?
 - What do the typical photos reveal about the way our society likes to represent children?
 - What do the unusual representations suggest about the lives of children in our society?

Photography, representation and meaning

Here are some basic principles of photographic representation:

- No-one ever took a photo of something they wanted to forget.
- Human beings prefer order over chaos. Photos are organised representations of reality.
- Everything within the frame may be analysed for the role it plays in constructing meaning. This includes the subject, location, characters, costume, make-up and props.
- The placement of subjects within a frame reveals much about how the photographer wants to represent them.
- Camera angles indicate the power of a subject.
- Light, shade, shadow, contrast, colour, tone, balance and symmetry construct meaning.

The language of visual analysis includes the technical and symbolic codes and conventions and art elements and design principles and processes outlined on page 38. These terms can be used to identify, deconstruct and analyse the meaning suggested by photographic representations. Not all terms are applicable to every image, but by using them, Media students are able to discuss images knowing that they share a common language and grasp of the principles of photographic composition, including compositional elements, technical elements and subject matter.

Photographers join the elements of photographic composition with the symbolic and technical codes and conventions of our culture to construct meaning. This happens at both a conscious and a subconscious level.

Analyse the composition of the images below. How do the elements of photographic representation construct meaning? What do you think the photographer wanted to say about the subject when composing each shot? These works are part of a photographic essay. How was the photographer trying to represent the subject?



The analysis of representation in media usually centres on commercial texts, but the skills can be applied to fine art images as well. What do you think the photographers were trying to represent in these images?



Greg Fiske





Weblink

Representing reality in news and current affairs

News and current affairs reporting in all media forms, including newspapers, magazines, TV, radio and the internet, is based on the principle of fair and accurate reporting of facts and opinion. Journalists and photojournalists are members of the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance and are subject to the MEAA Journalist Code of Ethics, which you can read on its website.

Audiences generally consider news texts to be objective and impartial, to represent reality by reporting on events as they occur, while opinionative articles and current affairs programming are understood to be more subjective. These views belie the fact that all news coverage is, to a greater or lesser extent, based on subjective responses to a range of practical, financial, industry, legal and social pressures. News and current affairs are complex, and there are always multiple ways of reporting any story. How a story, person, event or idea will be represented depends on the answers to these pressures.

Representations in news and current affairs texts are selected and constructed to appeal to a market. Both commercial and non-commercial media are driven by financial considerations: the need to maximise audiences while minimising costs. Media organisations compete for market share in the form of ratings, **readership**, or (for online media) clicks. This impacts on the selection of stories and the ways in which they are sourced and reported.

News and current affairs are expensive to produce, and it is in the interests of media organisations to build a wide audience base of consumers who are likely to buy the products advertised in and around news and current affairs texts. Representations in these texts are, therefore, likely to support the dominant values and expectations of the target market.

Representation through news values

The codes and conventions of news and current affairs are surprisingly similar across the world. Representations of stories, characters and ideas generally fit a standard pattern that is familiar to both news producers and audiences. Hard news consists of stories that are deemed important or new, affecting society as a whole. Hard news is constructed in an inverted pyramid, with the most important facts first and the remainder in order of importance. Soft news deals with personal stories and lifestyle reporting, which are generally not time-dependent and are more discursive in form.

News broadcasts and publications have traditionally begun with hard news and ended with soft news, although this pattern is changing, particularly online where news sites are increasingly responding to consumer preference for magazine-style news formats and a mix of hard and soft news, advertorials and clickbait. News stories are often shaped like a narrative, with an opening, development of both storyline and characters and concluding with a resolution of the story.

Audiences continue to believe news is an objective representation of events. Many of us turn on the news each evening expecting to keep up to date with what is happening in the world and locally. It doesn't take much thought, however, to realise that in a half-hour bulletin or a newspaper it is impossible to cover 'the' news; there is just so much of it. Instead, news outlets give us a selection of news and current affairs constructed for audience engagement while ignoring the rest.

Gatekeeping is the process where news organisations select the news for broadcast or print, the rest stays behind the media 'gate' and is never published. It makes sense for media outlets to practise gatekeeping. No news organisation could possibly cover all the news. But what makes a story newsworthy? How and why is some news selected while other news never sees the light of day?

News values are the criteria that news organisations use to determine the selection, construction and presentation of a news item. News values affect every decision in the news-making cycle, shaping the construction of news representations to encourage audience engagement. News values are financially and culturally determined and are based on building audiences through an understanding of audience preferences in both story types and structure. News values include:

- **Timeliness and exclusivity:** news values emphasise what is new. Breaking news attracts ratings.
- **Prominence and personality:** the more famous the subject, the more attention it is given. Elite countries and people receive more coverage.
- **Proximity:** news that occurs close to home is more 'important' and 'meaningful' than news in other places.

- Pertinence and predictability: how will news affect the audience? News that fits the media and their audience's expectations of news is more likely to be covered than news that challenges them.
- Simplicity: some news stories are too complex to be told in particular media forms. Audiences expect news to be unambiguous.
- Continuity and currency: ongoing news or sporting events encourage the audience to seek the next instalment and are newsworthy because they establish audience loyalty.
- Unusualness: the uncommon is more newsworthy than the familiar. When a dog bites a man, it is not news, but when a man bites a dog, it is.
- Conflict: bad news, good versus evil, debates and fights increase newsworthiness.
- Visual impact: are there images or video footage?
- Logistics: can the story be sourced in time without blowing the budget?
- Promotional value: does the story boost the status of the media outlet?

Activity 3.28 Codes and conventions in news representations

Choose one newspaper front page, one online newspaper and one television news broadcast that all occur on the same day in the same news market.

Use media codes and conventions, together with the news values outlined above, to analyse how representations in each of these texts have been constructed.

Note the similarities and differences between the construction of representations within a media form and across forms.

Create an annotated poster that illustrates your findings.

'Sellebrity' and cross-promotion in the news

Audiences are familiar with cross-promotion in advertising, sport and entertainment programs.

Cricketers promote KFC, Apple computers appear in films, and stars are dressed by fashion houses.

We do not expect such promotion to become news. With the possible exception of charity events, such as the Good Friday Appeal, audiences believe that news and current affairs texts should report on the news, not create or influence it.

However, news and entertainment texts are increasingly merging, as the proliferation of magazine inserts in newspapers and the content of popular current affairs programs reveal. It is now common to see a news report about a celebrity, TV program or film. This trend is partly in response to the type of content audiences prefer, as measured by clicks and ratings, and partly due to the opportunities presented when one media organisation owns several media outlets. The media call this cross-promotion between several programs or across media forms 'synergy'. Is synergy news? Is it ethical? Collect some examples of celebrity as news and cross-promotion and use them to make up your own mind.

The camera does not lie, but what about Photoshop?

It is commonly thought that digital imaging has seen the end of truth in photography. However, the doctoring of images is as old as photography itself. Since its inception, photography has enjoyed what has been termed a 'truth effect'; that is, the photographic negative was understood to represent the world in a truthful manner. Photographs were considered truthful representations of reality, admissible as evidence in court. That photographic reality could be manipulated in the darkroom was well known, but the belief that the negative was objectively truthful became part of our understanding of the medium of photography. This belief denies the truth, manipulation has always been part of the photographic process through the selection and construction of the photographic image.

Joseph Stalin's agents routinely arrested and killed anyone who disagreed with the Soviet dictator's politics as 'enemies of the people'. The Communist Party then removed every trace of these people from the photographic archives, and so from the media. The photo on the left in Figure 3.16 became a symbol of revolutionary Russia, but after Trotsky's downfall his image was removed from the widely distributed reproductions.



Figure 3.16 (Left) Lenin addresses a crowd in Moscow on 5 May 1920; Trotsky can be seen standing beside the platform on the right. After Lenin and Trotsky fell out, the image was altered and Trotsky was airbrushed from history (right).

The MEAA Journalist Code of Ethics clearly states that journalists, including photojournalists, should:

Present pictures and sound which are true and accurate. Any manipulation likely to mislead should be disclosed.

MEAA Journalist Code of Ethics

The question journalists, photographers and news editors must ask themselves is, in the context of news **reportage**, what do the terms 'true', 'accurate' and 'mislead' mean? For some stories, these terms might be interpreted literally; for others, a metaphorical treatment of reality might better represent the essence of the news. Constructions of reality can, in some ways, be more effective truths than a literal representation, as long as they do not mislead.

Manipulation of news representations can sometimes be used to protect readers while still conveying the truth. After the bombing of a train in Madrid in 2004, newspapers had access to images of victims lying on the tracks. Some newspapers published them as received. Others, out of concern for their readership, cropped out sections of the images, desaturated the colours or digitally altered the images to delete aspects of the horror. Follow the weblink to read about why editors made these decisions in a *Guardian* article published at the time.

Sometimes photographers set up or even fake images. At other times, individuals or organisations create news by staging an event, knowing that the press will cover it. The nightly news is full of celebrities at these types of events. It can be a fine line between promotion and manipulation of the news.

Digital manipulation is used by even the most highly regarded news organisations in order to suggest the reality they want audiences to believe. In June 1994, *Time* and *Newsweek* used the same image, an official police booking mugshot of OJ Simpson, on the front cover of the magazine. While *Newsweek* ran the unaltered photograph, *Time* was criticised for its manipulation of the same image. Find these images online and compare them for yourself.

Paul Hansen, the winner of the 2013 World Press Photograph of the Year, was widely criticised for submitting an image that it was claimed was composited from three source images. Hansen denied compositing, but acknowledged that he undertook significant toning to change the light in the image. As a result of this controversy, the criteria for judging has been changed and entrants must now submit the source image with the finished image. The question we must ask is, does the truth lie in the image itself or in the message of the image? To consider this question, look at *Time*'s '100 Photographs: the most influential images of all time' and at *National Geographic*'s annual photo competition entries. Every one of them will have undergone processing to make the image pop.

There is no war without photography.

Susan Sontag, American writer, filmmaker, teacher and political activist



Weblink



Alamy Stock Photo/ANGELIKA WARMUTH/dpa/Alamy Live News

Figure 3.17 Photographer Paul Hansen with his photo, *Gaza Burial*, 2013

Activity 3.29 Pics or it didn't happen

These days we are all familiar with the 'pics or it didn't happen' meme. Susan Sontag expressed a similar view in the quote on the previous page. Sontag was writing metaphorically. What do you think she meant? Reflect on the importance of photographs in representing your life.

When image is everything: representation of public figures

Those in the media eye carefully manage their public image. Wherever possible, they seek to control the images the public sees of them. Unflattering images can damage a reputation or their 'brand'. Public figures use advisers and stylists to help them construct the representation of themselves that they want the public to believe. Think about how often our prime minister is photographed from a low angle with the Australian flag behind him. This is no accident. However, it is not possible for public figures to stop photographs being taken; the public love to see unflattering 'unofficial' images, which are also useful for news outlets that want to publish bad news stories. It is easy to work out how the prime minister or any public figure wants to represent themselves from looking at their official photos online. Try googling the prime minister. Now keep scrolling through the Google results until you find images that are less flattering. What is an accurate representation and what is constructed for an audience?

Activity 3.30 Before and after: unofficial and official representations of public figures

Choose a public figure from the list below and search out as many images of them as you can. Good places to begin are their official websites and newspaper websites.

- The president of the United States of America
 - A member of the British royal family
 - A celebrity or media star
 - The captain of the Australian Cricket Team
- 1 What do the official images say about how the figure wants to be represented?
 - 2 What do unofficial images reveal about the figure?
 - 3 If there are marked differences, to what do you attribute these?

Representing realities in documentary

Documentary films, TV and radio programs have come a long way since the Lumière brothers' short films on Paris life in the late 19th century. Few early documentary filmmakers would recognise *Extreme Makeover* programs as direct descendants of their earnest attempts.

'Documentary' is, and has always been, a fluid term used to describe texts that combine images and sound to reveal, explain or provide an opinion about a subject in the real world.

Realism is the major principle of documentary texts, most of which claim to represent reality in an open and honest manner. In theory, documentaries attempt to 'document' their subjects equitably, balancing opinion and evidence evenly to construct a text that is unbiased and objective. Vision and sound are constructed to reveal the 'truth'. For their part, audiences read these representations as natural: the way it is. In truth, however, all documentaries construct rather than represent reality. They are always subjective, based on the views and values of their producers and of the societies in which they are created and read.

Over the history of the documentary form, audience understanding of how reality and truthfulness are represented has changed along with society's grasp of the nature of these concepts. What was once considered to be reality in a documentary text may today be thought of as just one of a range of realities, each of which is dependent on an audience's point of view. The production process influences the construction of reality at every stage of documentary filmmaking, progressively transforming reality into a codified representation.

Documentary film is 'the creative treatment of actuality'.

Documentary filmmaker John Grierson,
quoted in the 1930s

Newsreels, the first audiovisual documentary form

Before the advent of TV, newsreels were the only moving news and current affairs images available to the public. Cinemas screened one or two newsreels before the features (there were two in those days), and specialised cinemas screened continuous newsreels. Patrons purchased a ticket and stayed as long as they liked. Early newsreels were produced overseas, with Australian segments inserted upon arrival. Australian Movietone News commenced the first all-Australian edition in 1931.

At their peak, several newsreel editions were produced every week, and the news they contained was 'only' a week or two old. However, the growing popularity of TV in Australia after 1956 saw a decline in newsreels, and the industry gradually closed down. In Melbourne, the last specialised newsreel cinema, the Star, continued screening newsreels until the 1960s.

The representation of news and current affairs in newsreels was controversial right from the start, with arguments about the worth of the material selected for screening echoing the same arguments used about popular news and current affairs programs today.

It is claimed that early British documentary filmmaker John Grierson coined the term 'documentary' in 1926. Grierson's films were a reaction to what he saw as an obsession with glamour and trivia in the newsreels of the day. He believed that documentary film should represent its subjects seriously and that documentaries should be educational. Nevertheless, his definition of documentary recognised the construction of representation through selection and omission. He said reality was to be given a 'creative treatment'. Grierson did not mean by this that subjects should be misrepresented; rather, that they should be portrayed in an interesting manner. His aim was to use documentaries to reveal society's problems, such as poverty and poor housing, thereby opening up a debate about how these problems might be solved. The creative treatment Grierson spoke of served to illustrate rather than exaggerate.



Figure 3.18 Early Movietone newsreels used footage shipped from England and the United States before commencing an all-Australian edition in 1931.

Newsreels have no social obligation beyond those of the amusement industry and theatres they are supposed to serve. Newsreels have no obligation, if they are to be surveyed as entertainment in theatres, to be entertaining. They have no obligation to be important, informative. They can successfully present neither one side, both sides, nor the middle of any social condition or issue.

The editor of the Australian newsreel *Motion Picture Herald*, 1937

Early documentaries

Early documentaries were often very earnest in seeking to reveal the objective 'truth' about their subjects. In these expository documentaries, the convention of voice-over was employed to explain the meaning of the accompanying visual material with apparent objectivity. The technical limitations of early sound recording equipment – cameras at that time recorded image only; sound was recorded separately and added in post-production – meant that voice-over was the only practical way of adding speech in early documentaries. Interviews were therefore rare at this time. Thus technology dictated the way in which subjects could be represented and came to influence the documentary form itself.

The voice-over technique common in early documentaries has been termed the 'voice of God' for the powerful way in which it directs audiences to the 'real' meaning of the footage they are watching. The voice of God voice-over is still used today in many documentaries and in descendants of the documentary form, such as *The Block* and *Who Do You Think You Are?*

The film usually described as the first documentary is *Nanook of the North* (1922), directed by Robert J. Flaherty. This silent film documents one year in the life of Nanook, an Inuit Eskimo, and his family. Later criticised for its reconstructed sequences – which were considered inauthentic and therefore untruthful – *Nanook of the North* clearly demonstrated Flaherty's point of view about his subject, who was represented visually and in titles on screen as 'Chief of the Itivimuits'. Flaherty countered his critics with his belief that 'Sometimes you have to lie to tell the truth'.

Interestingly, in the early days of film, critics saw the documentary form as dull and lifeless. Film was considered by most as a medium of popular entertainment. Documentaries were not popular, and survived only because the form was supported by a band of committed filmmakers, and because it was recognised as a public service to education and knowledge. Documentaries responded to the critics by employing some of the conventions of feature films, in particular, music.

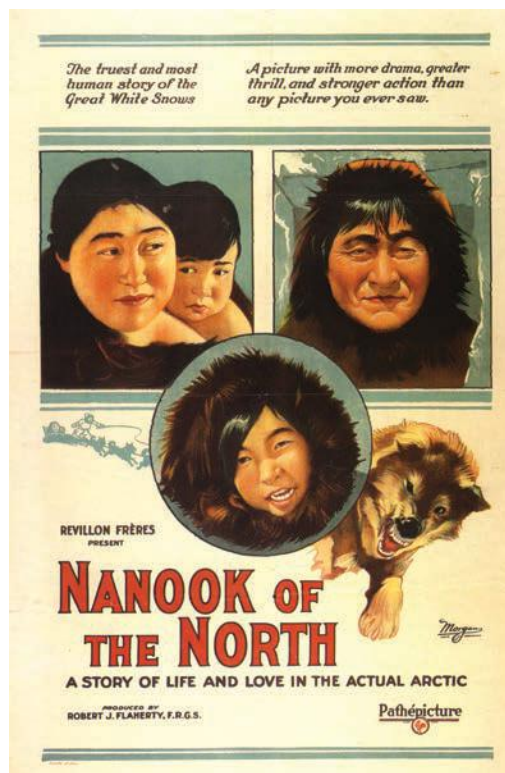


Figure 3.19 Poster for *Nanook of the North* (1922)

Alamy Stock Photo/Pictorial Press Ltd

Activity 3.31 The voice of God

- 1 Your school library will have a large collection of documentaries on many different subjects, such as nature, social issues, history, politics and science. Watch segments from a number of these programs on different subjects to determine how voice-over is used as a tool for supporting the meaning of the visual representations in documentaries. Can you determine any differences in the way in which voice-over is used in documentaries on different subjects?
- 2 Search the internet and use the Internet Archive to get hold of some early documentaries and note the differences in style and approach between these texts and those of today.
- 3 Analyse one documentary text in detail, looking at the match between voice-over and visuals. If you are not sure about how the relationship between sound and vision works, try watching with the sound muted.
 - a Choose a segment where the visuals would be interpreted differently with a different soundtrack. Write a new voice-over for this segment that alters the meaning of the visual footage.
 - b Record your new voice-over. Present the altered segment to your class, then play them the segment in its original form.
 - c Write a report that analyses the relationship between sound and vision in documentary.

Activity 3.32 How does music shape the meaning of documentary representations?

The use of music is ubiquitous in documentary films. This is especially the case in nature documentaries, where music is used to shape the narrative form of these texts.

Select a documentary that contains a musical soundtrack. For example:

- *Wild Australasia*
- *Australia: Eye of the Storm*
- *Baraka*
- *Blue Planet*
- *Wildness*
- *Bombora: The Story of Australian Surfing*.

If you choose a David Attenborough documentary, you will also be able to analyse perhaps the most influential voice of God ever in documentary.

Choose a segment where music is a powerful tool for suggesting meaning. Watch this segment carefully and then chart it. For each 10-second interval, note what you see and what is happening in the soundtrack, as follows:

Time	0	10 secs	20 secs	30 secs	40 secs	50 secs	60 secs	70 secs	80 secs	90 secs
Music										
Vision										
Meaning suggested by sound										

Analyse this data to understand how vision and music construct meaning in the text, and then write a report detailing your findings. You may like to show the segment to the class and deliver your report orally.

Documentary genres

Over time, the documentary form has developed many generic conventions and, like fictional narratives, documentaries often combine genres within the one text. Here are the most common documentary genres:

- **Expository documentaries:** an early documentary style that became the dominant form, where a voice-over in the form of a narrator explains the meaning of the accompanying visuals.
- **Observational documentary:** a documentary form in which material is filmed in such a way as to allow the subject to reveal its own story.
- **Poetic documentary:** the arrangement of footage, image and sound in order to evoke an audience association through tone, rhythm or spatial **juxtaposition**.
- **Direct cinema:** a documentary form that emerged in the 1960s, where the camera became a 'fly on the wall'.
- **Cinéma-vérité:** French for 'cinema truth'; a documentary form that shows its subjects in actual activities that seek to convey a deeper truth than the activity itself. This documentary movement emphasised the use of available light, hand-held cameras and long takes. Films in this style tend to strive for as much realism as possible.
- **Reflexive documentary:** a documentary form that continuously draws attention to its construction and questions the notion of truth and authority.
- **First-person documentary:** a documentary where a subject constructs and produces a story about themselves or a subject of personal concern.
- **Participatory documentary:** makers of these documentaries believe that it is impossible for the act of filmmaking to not influence or alter the events being filmed, positioning themselves as an anthropologist participant observer.
- **Performative documentaries:** these documentaries are strongly personal and stress a subjective experience and emotional response to the world. They want the audience to feel what it was like for the subject.
- **Docudrama:** a fact-based representation of real events in dramatic form.





- Docufiction: a hybrid genre that combines documentary footage with elements of fiction in order to strengthen the representation of reality the filmmaker is constructing.
- **Docusoap**: a documentary constructed in soap opera form.
- **Reality media**: media text forms in which non-actor participants are videotaped for entertainment purposes. The resulting footage is constructed into a narrative or docudrama form, where participants are constructed as representational characters and the activities in which they participate are developed as the plot.

When documentary goes bad: propaganda

In 1934 Leni Riefenstahl directed and produced a documentary that was to become the most famous example of documentary propaganda of all time. *The Triumph of the Will* documents the Third Reich's Nuremberg Party Rally of the same year. The film represented Hitler as an inspirational leader and the Nazi Party as the salvation of Germany.

Riefenstahl was a great filmmaker and the documentary, although chilling, is beautifully constructed, each shot building like a piece of music to a majestic, if terrible, climax.

All governments and many political organisations have used the documentary form as a propaganda tool. Few texts are as overt as *The Triumph of the Will*, but propaganda still exists today. If you are unsure about whether a text is propaganda, ask: Who are the stakeholders – creators, financiers, distributors and audiences – who stand to win or lose from its screening? What is the text's point of view and what are other points of view about the subject? The answers will help you read representations in the text and decide on its propaganda value.

Docudrama

Docudramas are very popular but can be highly controversial because they involve the recreation of events using actors and sets. Documentary elements are combined with elements of fictional narrative to create a text that is claimed to be historically accurate. For most audiences, the recreations are clearly just that: a method of breathing life into, for example, medieval villages or the traumas of Antarctic explorers, as part of a historical text. In these cases, audiences are aware that they are seeing a recreation.

It is important to question the supposed accuracy of recreated realities. How much creative licence went into recreating details that are not available through historical texts? It is one thing to recreate setting and costume, but how do elements such as lighting, script, acting and camera angles influence the nature of the reality being represented?

Historians may know the words spoken by a famous figure from history, but they cannot know the tone in which these words were delivered. Slight changes in emphasis can alter an audience's understanding of history. Ned Kelly is claimed to have said, 'Such is life', as he stepped onto the scaffold; what we do not know is the emphasis with which he said it. The actors who have played Kelly in countless recreations of this event have all delivered this line differently. The power of the



Figure 3.20 *The Triumph of the Will* (1935)

Alamy Stock Photo/Pictorial Press Ltd



Figure 3.21 *Lion* is ‘based on a true story’.

docudrama is such that audiences are likely to believe that acting as a true representation of events.

Docudramas are part of the current trend towards hybridisation of media forms and texts. They combine information with entertainment and, although highly criticised for their bias and for what has been called the ‘Disneyfication’ of history, have proved a hit with audiences who otherwise may not watch documentaries. They satisfy a desire for answers – not to the question of what happened; rather to the question why, and how those involved were affected. Docudrama provides motivation, a storytelling convention that audiences enjoy. Whether the representation of characters is realistic is another matter.

The field of docudramas is huge and so are the ethical dilemmas of the form. In some texts, recreations are labelled as such, as on *Crime Stoppers*. Research

shows that audiences are adept at discerning the degree of reality represented in these recreations.

Other docudramas cross the line between information and entertainment. Some feature films – such as *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (2002), directed by Phillip Noyce, about the Stolen Generations, and *Lion* (2016), directed by Garth Davis, about a young man trying to find his family – rely on an audience reacting to them as authentic, yet claim only to be ‘based on a true story’. These narratives demonstrate a clear directorial point of view in the representations of characters and events as good and evil. See page 285 for a breakdown of the extent of reality in *Lion*.

THE RISE AND RISE OF REALITY MEDIA

Of all recent developments in the media, reality TV has received the most criticism. It has been called banal, intrusive, obscene, childish and exploitative. It is fashionable to decry the moral decline that reality TV is supposed to encapsulate, yet audiences continue to tune in.

Reality TV takes many forms, including:

- competitions
- talent quests
- **infotainment**
- workplace and community documentaries
- docusoaps
- sociological and ‘historical’ experiments.

As is often the case, media audiences criticise the taste of others, but hold that their own reality TV choices are somehow superior, a phenomenon closely related to the **third-person effect**. The demise of *Big Brother* in 2008 was celebrated mostly by those who had not watched it; however, those same viewers may choose to watch SBS and ABC texts such as *Go Back to Where You Came From* or the next episode in the long-running series *Up*. These days, there is a reality TV program for every taste.

Reality programming demands that audiences analyse representations constructed within texts, together with the readings that they and other audiences make of these representations. This analysis becomes even more important when audiences are able to influence the outcome of texts through voting or other interactive elements.

Interestingly, most reality TV is not about reality at all. Sending a group of participants to an isolated location or requiring contestants to renovate a house for profit is not reality as we know and understand it, but a constructed representation of society’s values such as the importance of hard work, competition, honesty or talent.

When analysing the representations constructed in reality media, it can be helpful to make the distinction between:

- the constructed ‘reality’ of the text, the location, situation and narrative structure, and
- the authenticity of the constructed reality, the degree of realism in the ways in which characters and others interact with each other, and the situations in which they find themselves.

Confused? Think of it like this. *Survivor* is not reality; it is a game show that uses representations of its location as the focus for a competition. What is real about *Survivor* is that both the contestants and the audience know that the text is a construction, and both allow themselves to **suspend disbelief** and participate in the experience. Contestants are playing the game of *Survivor*, and audiences enjoy the excitement of what is essentially unscripted, but tightly edited, drama.

Most audiences react to reality TV on an emotional level, cheering for their favourite contestant and commiserating with the losers. Audiences know that they are not watching reality. They also know the codes and conventions that structure the representations within these texts.

Just as you constructed a representation of your Media class in Activity 3.4, audiences know that a narrative can be constructed from the many hours of footage shot for a reality TV program.

Participants apply knowing what they are getting into. This may not have been the case for early examples of the genre such as *Big Brother*, but today contestants are knowledgeable and experienced viewers, understanding very well that elements of their life on set will be selected and constructed to represent them as characters within the narrative. What they do not have control over is how they will be represented, positively or negatively. Nevertheless, many are still willing to participate, with thousands lining up for each audition.

The construction of character begins early in the pre-production phase of a text's life. Producers decide on the character types they need for the program. During the audition process, participants are carefully selected for their audience appeal; they must represent the values of the target market. Stereotypes such as nerds, bitchy girls and hardworking battlers are frequent tropes of the genre.

On set, participants are placed in situations that allow their personality to be developed as a character. Footage is selected and constructed into a narrative. Character and story arcs overlap to provide the rhythm of narrative construction: establishment, development, climax and resolution.

The audience is positioned to become emotionally engaged with characters in crisis for whom they suspend disbelief to read as real people in real situations.

Product placement and advertising support the construction of realism in reality TV texts. The products are domestic, but also aspirational – something that both participants and the audience can relate to, such as flat-screen TVs, household items, furniture and food.

What does reality TV really represent?

Today the documentary genre flourishes in a range of forms, including hybridised reality TV in which B-grade stars and A-list celebrities appear. Reality and lifestyle TV programs, together with their associated websites and ad campaigns, are an interesting **spin** on the representation of reality. Just what are the realities that Kim Kardashian or Jamie Oliver represent?

Despite the inevitable failures due to a saturated market and a glut of 'me too' programming, the genre continues to be successful. As Media students, it is important to ask why. What is the pleasure or gratification that audiences get from these texts, and why does the genre create such vociferous debate and scorn from those who do not watch it? Reality TV is big business and, like all media texts, not every version can survive. Those that do reflect the values and interests of the audiences that support them.

In the end programs like The Block essentially become soap operas, they are about the characters. You don't want characters that are too outlandish, because if the audience can't relate it falls over, and you certainly don't want characters that are too bland because then you don't have the content.

Andrew Backwell, Director of Production, Network Nine, 'Reality's Vital First Step', *The Australian*, 2004



Figure 3.22 The construction of realism in reality media

courtesy of Nine Network

Activity 3.33 Construction and selection in reality TV

Compile a list of all current reality TV programs. Divide these texts among the class and, in pairs or small groups, research one text. Use the following headings to order your observations:

- Character codes and conventions
For each character, note the following:
 - Character type and personality
 - Physical appearance and costume
 - Behaviour as constructed by the text
 - Character arcs, tension and relationships between characters
 - Symbolic role in the game or program
- Story codes and conventions
 - Text structure
 - Plot
 - Setting
 - Storylines and story arcs
 - Moments of crisis: spontaneous and as constructed by the producer
 - Resolution of these crises
- Production codes and conventions
 - Camera
 - Editing
 - Lighting
 - Sound
 - Special effects
- Other reality TV elements
 - Social values supported and/or challenged by the text
 - Degree of realism created by the representations in the text
 - Sponsorship and product placement.

Compare your analysis with those of other groups, and try to determine some patterns of representation in current reality TV texts. Do these texts have any common messages for audiences? If so, what are they?



Figure 3.23 Me, the author of this book. What do you think I am trying to represent about myself in this avatar used in all my social media?

REPRESENTATION OF SELF

How do you represent yourself in the media? Do you have one image or **avatar** that represents you and how you want to be seen in the world, or are you a shapeshifter who presents different representations of yourself for different audiences?

Until recently, it was only artists who were concerned with the representation of self. Today, everyone with an online presence spends time curating their image with carefully selected images, words and music.

Representation of self in the form of the self-portrait has a long history in art. More recently, digital photography and social media have allowed everyone to construct and distribute representations of self whenever they choose. Does this make all of us artists?

QUESTIONING REPRESENTATIONS OF SELF: WHAT, HOW, WHY AND EFFECT

Representations in media products are constructed with a purpose. Whether the product is professionally produced or created in a spontaneous moment, all representations are purposeful.

As Media students, you will often analyse how a representation is constructed, examining the technical and symbolic codes and conventions used in its construction. You will identify the use of codes such as line, colour, visual composition, editing and sound to determine how the representation has come to be, but the most interesting question we can ever ask about any representation, including self-representations, is why. Why did the artist, filmmaker, photographer or writer choose to represent themselves? Why did the media maker construct media codes and conventions in the representation as they have? When we have answered the question of why, we can determine the relationship between the work and the audience.

Artists usually have a preferred meaning for their work, particularly when it comes to representations of self. Audiences, however, may not construct the same meaning. Audiences read media texts based on their own experiences. Look at the images in Figures 3.24 and 3.25. What do you think these two famous Australian artists were trying to say? You can read more about these images on the National Portrait Gallery website.



Weblink

Courtesy of the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney



Figure 3.24 Tracey Moffatt, *Self Portrait*, 1999, handcoloured photograph 33.5 × 22 cm



Figure 3.25 *In the mirror: self portrait with Joy Hester* 1939 by Albert Tucker (1914–1999)

Gelatin silver photograph, Collection: National Portrait Gallery, Canberra, Gift of the artist 1999, Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program

Activity 3.34 Reading self-portraits

Sometimes it is not easy to determine a photographer's intent in constructing an image. The images in Figures 3.26 and 3.27, from the National Youth Self Portrait Prize and the Digital Portraiture Award, reveal much about how the subject sees themselves. What do you think each of the artists is saying? When you have analysed each image, turn to page 401 to read the artist's statement. How close was your analysis?

Joey Knox

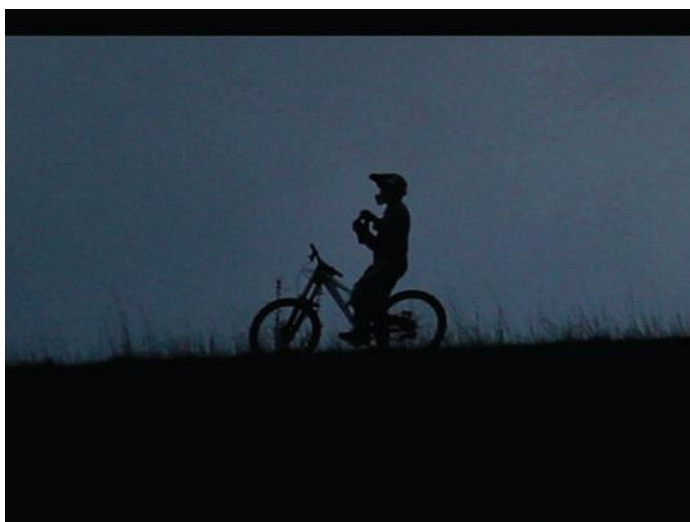


Figure 3.26 Still from *Downhill* by Joey Knox, 2013

Bridget Mac



Figure 3.27 *Masculine/feminine* by Bridget Mac, 2010

Selfies

As you will discover in Chapter 8, distrust of new media has been a common reaction to developments in media technologies and practices since – well, Plato in ancient Greece! The rise of the selfie is another in a long line of shock horror headlines about the end of civilisation as we know it. Everyday people did not take selfies in the 'olden days' because they couldn't; the technology would not allow it, photographs were very expensive to print and there was no easy way to share images.

Today, put three things together that old people don't trust – youth, celebrities and culture – and it is no wonder that selfies have been subject to so much criticism. You may have experienced this yourself when your parents and grandparents despair as you capture yet another self-representation. Your friends on your social media feed get it, but so many oldies don't. For them, the memory of photographs being expensive and therefore special overrides your truthful explanation, 'Because I can.' Science, however, has come to your aid, as this article demonstrates.

TAKING THE SELF OUT OF SELFIE – MOST PICTURES NOT ABOUT VANITY, SAYS STUDY

Australian analysis of more than 5000 selfies posted to Instagram concludes they are not really about narcissism but simply a part of everyday life.

The act of taking a digital photograph of oneself has been variously hailed as empowering, demeaning, narcissistic, artistic, feminist, anti-feminist and disruptive to dolphins.

But new research into the apparently very nuanced medium of selfies has led to the most outlandish conclusion yet: they are simply part of everyday life.

Australian analysis of more than 5000 selfies has concluded that they are 'more than a form of vanity', with 90% 'not posted with the intent of self-promotion'.

Researchers at the Australian National University's College of Business and Economics assessed randomly selected selfies posted to Instagram over a period of 10 days, and found that only one in 10 were taken to communicate physical attractiveness for the sole purpose of raising an online following.

The rest were simply 'aimed at friends and family,' said Dr Toni Eagar, a co-author of the study.

'It's neither narcissism nor self-empowerment. People are using selfies as a tool as part of their everyday life,' she said.

The findings disputed the idea that selfies were a form of vanity, said researchers, with seven 'distinct genres' of images emerging from the dataset.

The most popular (35%) was the 'autobiography selfie', which documented the highs and lows of a person's life, ranging from graduations and weddings to 'simply being bored'. An additional 6% functioned as 'travel diaries'.

The 'romance selfie' celebrated being with significant others. The share of 21% 'also included selfies which celebrated being single, often after a recent break-up'.

Only 11% of the images were categorised as 'propaganda selfies'.

The 'parody selfie' (12%) made fun of social media trends or current media events while the 'coffee table book selfie' (9%) was artistic, often digitally manipulated photography.

The 'self-help selfie' (7%) demonstrated knowledge in a particular area such as diets, fitness or beauty, often with

an instructional or inspirational message.

Of the selfie 'propagandists', Eagar said it was more accurate to think of them as small business owners, hoping to leverage their online following into paid endorsements or 'Insta-fame'.

'These are people selling a view of their lifestyle or themselves, and the currency of the transaction is likes and follows – the aim is to build an audience and establish a type of fame or admiration on social media.'

The trend was driven by marketers looking to social media 'influencers' to sell their products, instead of the traditional celebrity endorsements, she said.

'This is a commercial exchange, just like small business activity. They are advertising. It was very deliberate, they had plans, and they clearly had ambitions.'

Most of the selfies posted, however, were simply visual records of everyday life, shared for the straightforward enjoyment of the self-and-subject and their friends, family and followers.

'Taking the self out of selfie – most pictures not about vanity, says study', Elle Hunt, *The Guardian*, 8 October 2016

Codes and conventions in selfies

Most selfies are posted from a mobile phone, which means that the codes and conventions used to construct them are usually limited to visual composition, cropping of images, filters and effects such as emoji. You can see these codes at work in an interesting site called Selfiecity, which investigates the style of selfies in five cities across the world. The site is fascinating. Launch the 'selfiexploratory' tool to filter the data and discover patterns. It's time to analyse selfie codes and conventions.



Weblink



Weblink

Activity 3.35 Decoding the selfie

Collect typical selfies from your feed or cameraphone. The best way to do this is to collect the most recent 20. You will be tempted to edit these to the best 20, but resist this temptation; to do so will mean that you do not have an accurate set of representations.

Share your selfies with your classmates. This will give you a big dataset to analyse. Methods for sharing include posting on one site or page that your teacher has set up for this task, creating pages of thumbnails in Photoshop or pasting them into a table in a Google document.

Work in small groups to analyse the codes and conventions used in the construction of the selfies in your dataset. Make notes about common elements. Note any unusual use of codes.

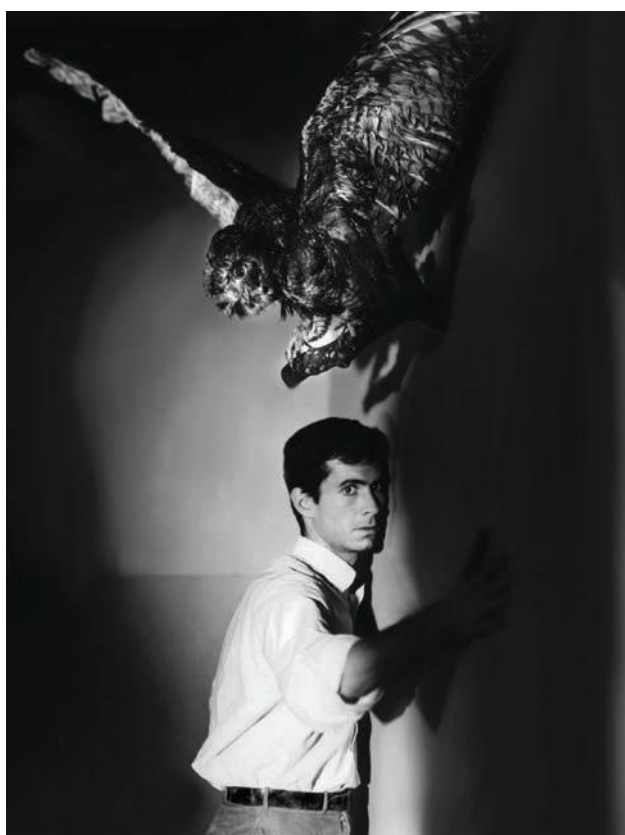
Create a poster or online presentation that illustrates the results of your analysis.

REPRESENTING IDENTITY SYMBOLICALLY

Identity is bound up in much more than image. Objects, relationships, locations, sounds, colours and text all contribute to a sense of self and all appear in media representations of identity.

Think about how characters are constructed in film. Often the mise en scène reveals more than anything else. Look at the image from Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) in Figure 3.28. How does the mise en scène construct Norman's character?

Sound plays an important part in representing ideas and characters. Think of your favourite characters and the sounds you associate with them. In many films, each character, theme or repeated action has a theme, called a **leitmotif**, which aurally represents them. The construction of the Joker's evil madness through the manipulation of a screeching cello and bashed piano strings in *The Dark Knight* (2008) is frightening (watch the DVD extra to see its creation), but the 'Everything is Awesome' theme of *The Lego Movie* (2014) cannot help but bring a smile to your face.



Alamy Stock Photo/AF archive

Figure 3.28 Still from *Psycho* (1960). Norman's face looks innocent, but the construction of this shot says otherwise.

Activity 3.36 Build a collection of cinematic themes

The internet is full of wonderful mini-documentaries about sound design in film. Many DVD extras also contain information on how sound was constructed.

Collect great examples of cinematic representation using sound. Think about why you have chosen these examples and write a commentary in the form of a script that explains your choices. Use software such as Audacity to record your script and edit your collection into a podcast. Share your podcast with your classmates.



Activity 3.37 The soundtrack of your life

Use film themes, your favourite music and sounds from your life that you capture on your phone to create a soundscape representation of self. Be creative in the editing of your recording. Ask your teacher to share the soundtracks with the class and guess who created them.



Getty Images/Hulton-Deutsch Collection/CORBIS

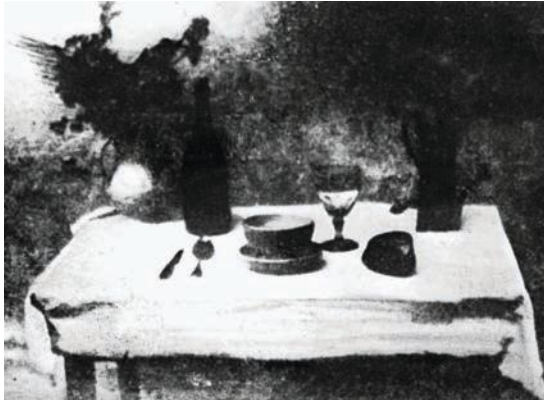


Figure 3.29 This image is claimed to be the first photograph of food, taken in 1832 by Joseph Nicéphore Niépce.

Instagram representations of self

Representations of self are often symbolic. Many Instagram feeds, for example, are full of representations of self that do not contain people but are comprised of images of objects, pastimes or food. The craze for ‘foodstagram’ has changed the relationship between audiences, food and the media as everyday people publish casual reviews of restaurants and cafes through their Instagram page. They say you can tell a lot about a person from the food they eat, and now we can tell a lot by the way people photograph and publish their food.

Shutterstock.com/Elenadesign



Shutterstock.com/Toni Schmidt

Shutterstock.com/Elena Hramova



Shutterstock.com/Kasey Titchener

Figure 3.30 What can you say about the representation of self through these Instagram images?

Activity 3.38 Amazing representations

Celebrate your learning by creating a class display of the best representations everyone can find in any media form. Spend some time reflecting on how and why they were created and why your classmates chose these representations.

Write a report about what you have learnt during this area of study.

OUTCOME 2

On completion of this unit the student should be able to use the media production process to design, produce and evaluate media representations for specified audiences in a range of media forms.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 2.

KEY KNOWLEDGE

- the characteristics of specific media audiences and how productions can be designed and produced to engage these audiences
- stages in the media production process including pre-production, production and post-production
- media pre-production, production and post-production techniques to represent ideas and achieve particular effects
- media codes and conventions used to construct meaning in media products
- media technologies used to produce representations in a range of media forms
- the characteristics of a range of media representations in media forms
- media production language appropriate to the design, production and evaluation of media representations in a range of media forms.

KEY SKILLS

- describe the characteristics of specific media audiences and explain how productions can be designed and produced to engage audiences
- use media pre-production, production and post-production techniques and processes
- research and apply media design and production techniques to represent ideas and achieve particular effects
- apply media codes and conventions to construct meaning in media products
- operate media technologies to produce representations in a range of media forms
- evaluate the characteristics of a range of media representations in media forms
- use media language appropriate to the design, production and evaluation of media representations in a range of media forms.

Area of Study Outcomes, Key Knowledge and Key Skills points are reproduced by permission from the VCE Media Study Design (2018–2022), © VCAA.



Scaffold

This chapter is about production ideas and activities building on the concepts covered in Outcomes 1 and 3. Information about conceptualising and describing your audiences and media design, production and post-production processes is detailed in Chapter 2. Use the techniques and conventions outlined there to help you design and create production activities for this outcome.

Production resources, including storyboard and photographic mock-up masters, shot lists, call sheets, talent release forms and tips and tricks for working with technology, can be found on NelsonNet. Your teacher will guide you as to the activities you will work on, building skills from simple tasks to complex productions.

REPRESENTATION

The key concepts in Media are audience and representation. Every representation is created with an audience in mind. The technical and symbolic codes and conventions that are used to create representations are seemingly endless. The following activities are designed to develop skills and push your creativity in creating representations of ideas in a range of media forms for different audiences.

Activity 4.1 Representing ideas

Some ideas and concepts are easier to represent than others. To illustrate this, choose one topic from each of the following lists.

List 1 (the easy ones)

- Heat
- Intelligence
- Power
- Happiness
- Love
- Hatred
- Friendship
- Growth
- Competition
- Jealousy

List 2 (a bit harder)

- Truth
- Greed
- Simulation
- Infinity
- Normality
- Contentedness
- Blandness
- The Australian economy
- Personal reflection
- Air

iStock.com/nico_blue



iStock.com/duncan1890



Figure 4.1 How would you represent love and hate?

- 1 Use media codes and conventions to design and produce one digital image or brief video sequence that represents each topic. Your audience is your classmates. Do not use text – this is an exercise in visual representation.
- 2 Display your representations alongside those created by your classmates. Can you read the meaning of each representation? Now show your work to someone who is not in your class. Can they identify the meanings of your representations?
 - a Which codes and conventions worked most effectively?
 - b Which worked less well?
 - c To what do you attribute the success of some representations and the failure of others?
- 3 For those representations that did not work effectively, write a news item on a topic that the image or sequence could be used to illustrate.
 - a How effective is the combined visual and textual representation?
 - b Reflect on the contribution of text in the representation of some subjects.

Activity 4.2 Messing with meanings

These activities illustrate the power of words and how that power can be manipulated through tangible and intangible productions. Choose one or more activities from the list below.

- 1 Cut out and collect magazine and newspaper headlines. Use them to create a poster comprising text only to create a representation of a current news item. Be creative with your ideas. The text can be used alone or words can be combined so that they create an illustration or montage.
- 2 Create a print document about a common emotion – love or hate, for example. Manipulate the colours, layout and fonts to exaggerate the representation.
- 3
 - a Use word cloud software such as Wordle to create a word cloud of the lyrics from your favourite song.
 - b Now, using the same text, change the layout, colours and fonts to create a representation that conveys the exact opposite of the original meaning of the text.
 - c Print both representations, and analyse the effect of the compositional elements you used on the meaning.
- 4 Use cut-outs, Scrabble letters, Lego, sticks, sand or anything else that you can find to form into letters to create an animation that illustrates an idea such as hot or cold. Video your animation and show it to your class. Make notes about their reactions.
- 5 Experiment with the representation of a one-word idea, such as 'sunshine'. Try to convey the idea of your chosen word in every medium available to you.



Figure 4.2 Here are two word clouds created from a well-known Australian love song. Note how the use of colour, layout and font construct two very different meanings. Can you work out the song?

Tangible or object-based representations such as photographs can be repurposed into intangible or time-based representations. PowerPoint, Flash animation, video and film **montage** productions all use photos to tell stories and represent ideas. When put to music or with an added soundtrack, still images can be very powerful. Video clips often use this technique. Other advantages of montage are that the filmmaker can pace and repeat images for representational emphasis, which forces the audience to consider them more than fleetingly. Why not try it?

Activity 4.3 Montage action

- 1** This activity can be completed as a PowerPoint presentation or video montage.
 - a** Choose a theme and collect as many images as you can from magazines, newspapers or the internet. Fashion and sport are two topics that you will find are well resourced.
 - b** Lay the images out and decide on your point of view about the material you have collected.
 - c** Choose a soundtrack that suits.
 - d** Decide on the order in which you want to display your images.
 - e** Think about the length of time each image will appear on the screen and the power of repetition to suggest meaning.
 - f** Plan your montage by creating a timeline on graph paper or using the sound design template on NelsonNet. Note the beat and sound cues so you can edit image to sound.
 - g** Scan or video the images.
 - h** Import this material into a video editing program and add the soundtrack.
 - i** Edit your montage. You can add titles and credits if you wish.
 - j** Use your images to create a poster on the same subject.
 - k** Present your montage to your class.





- 2 While you are watching the montages your classmates have made, think about the contribution of each of the following elements to the meaning of the production, and then write a list of helpful hints for making effective montages:
 - images
 - ordering of images
 - pace
 - repetition
 - sound.

Activity 4.4 Clichés, clichés everywhere, and not an original idea among them – until now!

So many media representations are clichéd, repetitive, derivative or stereotyped that sometimes it appears nothing is ever original. This activity tests your knowledge of media clichés and challenges you to avoid them.

Of all the ideas most commonly clichéd, love has to be the most prevalent. Baz Luhrmann made effective use of the representations used in clichéd love songs in *Moulin Rouge!* (2001), when Christian sang a medley entirely constructed of lyrics from love songs:

*Love is a many splendored thing
Love lifts us up where we belong
All you need is love*

- 1 Make two media products for someone you love in the same medium on the topic of love:
 - One should use every clichéd representation of love you can come up with.
 - The other should contain no clichés at all.
- 2 Compare your products. Which worked better? Why?
- 3 What difficulties did you experience in constructing the representations for each product, and how did you overcome these?
- 4 Present your products to your Media class. Which were the most successful representations of love? What readings do they make of your works? Which were the least successful? Why?

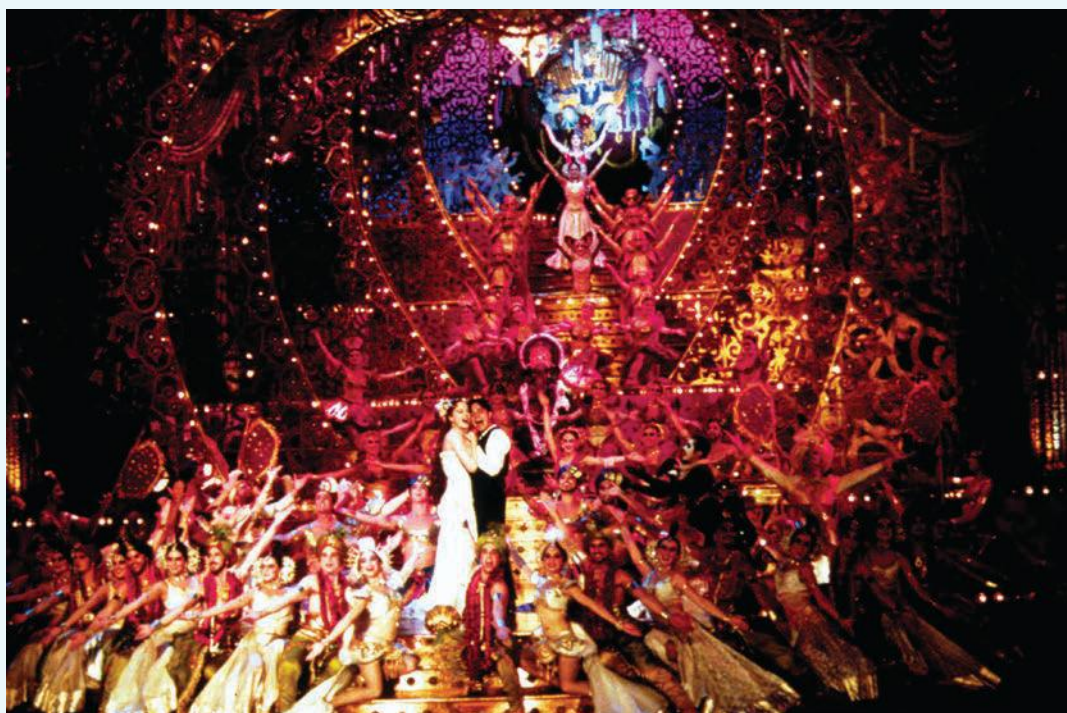


Figure 4.3 Ewan McGregor fills the world with silly love songs in *Moulin Rouge!*

Alamy Stock Photo/Entertainment Pictures

Activity 4.5 Movie trailer recuts

Everyone enjoys movie trailers, but sadly they are often better than the film itself! This task gives you the opportunity to create your own movie trailer and poster. You can create a serious trailer or a parody – it's up to you.

There are thousands of recut trailers online. Why not begin by having a look at some? Try googling the following:

- Legend Alone
- Scary Mary
- Sleepless in Seattle mashup
- The Shining mashup
- The Dark Toy Story
- Toy Story 3: Inception.

Once you are familiar with the form, choose a film you have really enjoyed. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Who is the market for the film you are promoting?
- What are the things this market enjoys in a film?

Watch the film again looking for scenes and shots you could use to represent the film in a promotional trailer. Note the time code of these segments.

- 1 Script and storyboard a 60-second trailer for the film.
- 2 Design a poster that complements your trailer.
- 3 Capture the footage you need to make both the trailer and the poster, and produce both.
- 4 Now answer the following questions:
 - a When selecting footage to use in your trailer, how did you choose to represent the film to your audience? What codes and conventions did this material demonstrate?
 - b Sixty seconds is not a long time. What material did you choose to omit? Why?
 - c What representations do your trailer and poster have in common?
 - d How does working in two forms change the nature of the representations?
 - e What does the trailer do better? What does the poster do better?

Activity 4.6 Film genre stereotypes

Audiences read films by interpreting the codes and conventions used to create character types.

In this activity you will work alone or in pairs to design a stereotypical character for a film genre.

Photocopy the two lists below, cut each up and place them into two hats, one for character, the other for genre. Randomly select one from each hat.

Choose a title for your film and design a character in the style of the genre you have selected. Think about the use of codes and conventions, such as physical features, costume, props and make-up, that will suggest meaning.

Create a poster in which your character is the star of a film. Use the codes and conventions of film posters, including layout, text, typography and colour.

You may also like to create a titles sequence for the film so that you can compare the ease of representing character types and genre through titles.

List 1: character

Hero or heroine
Villain
Loving mother
Hardworking man
Migrant
Lazy teenager
Nerd
Doctor
Nurse
Teacher
Scientist
Explorer
Unemployed person
Victim

List 2: genre

Action movie
Drama
Comedy
Chick flick
Western
Science fiction
Suspense
Romance
Crime
Historical
War
Musical
Disaster
Arthouse

CHOOSING TECHNOLOGIES FOR EFFECT

It is clear that technology alters the ways in which a subject may be represented. Artists and media professionals carefully select the technologies they work with because they want to construct representations with particular characteristics that can best be achieved using techniques available in the chosen technology.

Activity 4.7 Talk to the hand

Using two or more of the photographic technologies listed below, design and construct a series of images of the same simple subject: the human hand. Try to make each image as strong and beautiful as possible – your aim is to showcase the possibilities of each technological form.

- Pinhole photography
- Photogram
- Silver gelatin photography
- Polaroid photography
- Digital photography
- Cameraphone
- Photocopy
- Toy camera
- Scanner

Compare the contributions that each technology brings to the subject.



Figure 4.4 How would you portray the human hand?

Activity 4.8 Hands across technology

Scan or import the images you created for Activity 4.7 into a photo imaging program. Manipulate the images in the following ways:

- Use the tools available to manipulate them to look as close to the original image as possible.
- Now alter each image as much as you can, while still retaining the original meaning.

Print each image and compare them to the originals. Which are better? Why?

Activity 4.9 News and digital art

Increasingly, press images combine photographic and digital imaging technologies to construct images.



AAP Image/Moodboard

Figure 4.5 How do you think this image was created? What sort of article might be illustrated with this type of image?



Make a collection of newspaper illustrations that use digital imaging technologies.

Select one, and write a report explaining:

- how the original image was manipulated
- why you think the photographer and newspaper chose to use this technique
- how the manipulation contributes to the meaning of the representations in the image.

Write a news article about a controversial topic, such as climate change, and create an image to accompany it that combines several images to emphasise your point of view.

Activity 4.10 Leaving

This activity explores the codes and conventions of different media technologies for conveying the same idea.

The subject is 'leaving'. The details of who is leaving and where they are leaving from are up to you.

Perhaps someone is leaving home, their workplace or even a relationship. It's your call.

Research how different media forms represent the idea of leaving. For example, what are the technical and symbolic codes and conventions that allow audiences to understand what is happening when a character in a film gets into a car and is next seen in a different location?

Choose a subject, and then design and produce a sequence that conveys the idea of someone leaving one place and arriving at another. Think about how you can convey the complexity of this idea in only a minute or two of video footage, a series of images, or using sound alone.

Share your production with your classmates. How do they read your intended meaning? What alternative readings do they come up with?

Evaluate your classmates' sequences. Write a list of the codes and conventions used to convey the idea of leaving that are common to each media form.

Activity 4.11 The seven deadly sins and the seven heavenly virtues

This activity is designed to get you thinking metaphorically/symbolically.

Listed below are the seven deadly sins and the seven heavenly virtues. Your task is to create an image for each sin or each virtue that represents the subject, but does not slide into cliché or tackiness.

Seven deadly sins

- Pride
- Envy
- Gluttony
- Lust
- Anger
- Greed
- Sloth

Seven heavenly virtues

- Faith
- Justice
- Prudence
- Hope
- Temperance
- Fortitude
- Charity



Alamy Stock Photo/AF archive

Figure 4.6 How would you represent gluttony without sliding into cliché or tackiness?

Activity 4.12 Video? Photography? Web page? Print? Sound? Animation? Decisions, decisions!

- 1 The subject is 'autumn'. The medium is up to you. Begin by thinking about autumn. What does it represent?
 - a Select an appropriate audience and choose a media form, then design and produce a product about autumn. Present your production to your class.
 - b When it is your turn to be in the audience, make notes about the different approaches to the task your classmates used, and which media forms worked best for the specified audience.
- 2 For an added degree of difficulty, try one of these:
 - Put all the media forms in which your class is able to work into a hat. Everyone pulls one out, and designs and creates a product for the media form they select.
 - Everyone designs a media product and the designs go into a hat. You produce the design you pull out.

Activity 4.13 Glossy mag or zine?

Make a collection of hard-copy magazines from a range of sources, including the glossiest fashion and car magazines, local sporting club and school magazines, and underground and alternative political zines.

Analyse each one to see how the production values, technologies and codes and conventions used to create the magazine construct the representations it contains. Make notes about the production values of each genre and title.

Now design, write the copy and create double-page spreads for a magazine about your Media class in two contrasting magazine styles. As you work, think about how content and copy, journalistic style, art and illustrations, page layout, colour, typography and reproduction technology contribute to the meaning in each style.

Pin the magazine pages up in your classroom and guess what genre and style each production is attempting to emulate.

Activity 4.14 Old school

Collect as many different types of film cameras as you can in one place. Look for cheap cameras, as well as expensive high-tech ones. Don't forget to look in your old toy box and op shops.

Design and create some photographs and study the results. Are there any features of the analogue images that you would like to emulate using digital technologies?

JACK GAMBLE, A TOP DESIGNS EXHIBITOR WHO STUDIED PHOTOGRAPHY AT RMIT



Jack Gamble

People ask why photography in this multimedia world? But my response is why not?! Photography is here to stay. Despite the massive popularity of digital cameras and the user-friendliness of image-making technology ... I believe there will always be a

place for the renegade image makers in this so-called 'multimedia world'.

Photography is pure and fun and easy. It's considered expensive, but it doesn't have to be. The reality is, if you're not a label junky or consumer whore, photography can be accessible to a lot of people from many walks of life.

Aesthetics? I'm not really into edgy techniques and technology as much as I'm into the humble and banal. I'd go my Holga over my D-SLR for most of my pictures these days. I think the sterility of the digital age has made the now retro techniques of yesterday significantly more attractive and cool ... 'I shoot plastic, I'm old school.'

If it's what you love, follow photography like there's no tomorrow. Listen carefully to advice





from others, but be careful what exactly you take on board. Don't dismiss your passion or opinion because someone doesn't agree with you. That includes your teachers, parents and

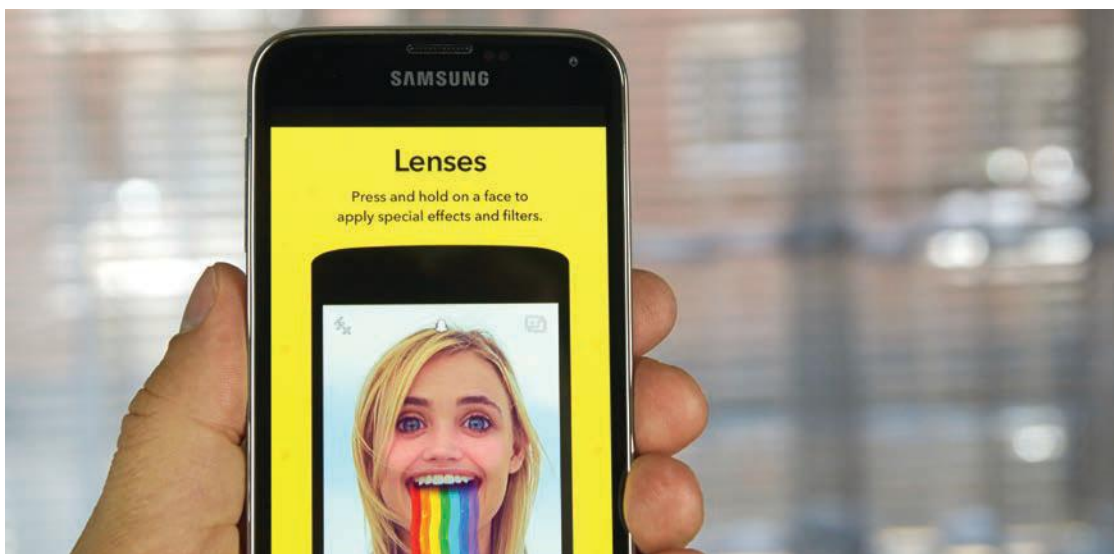
peers. Listen to music, see exhibitions, watch films and take note on which buttons it all presses. Then go make pictures.



Figure 4.7 Lomography images by Jack Gamble

Technology has changed how we see and create

Digital media technologies have altered not only how we make media but also what we consider to be real. Digital manipulation and enhancement using software such as Photoshop and apps like Snapchat are so commonplace that audiences now read the addition of filters not as disguising faults but as expressions of the photographer's reality at the time of making an image. The following activities are an opportunity to explore the good, the bad and the ugly sides of image manipulation.



Shutterstock.com/dennizn

Figure 4.8 Digital media has enabled deeper communication of reality through social media filters.

Activity 4.15 Representation in cyberspace

In a **postmodern** world, the way we understand ideas is not static but subject to change and reinvention. Every idea can be given a new meaning and begin life afresh. In this activity, you are going to create new meanings from material you find on the internet.

Choose a topic from the list below and search the internet for as many representations of the topic as you can find. Copy these into a folder.

- Art
- Nature
- Education
- Sport
- Youth
- The internet

Create a web page or online poster that uses the representations you have downloaded to create an entirely different representation of your topic. You may add text, interactivity and animation if you wish.

Display your work to your class. (Remember, it is unlikely that you will be able to print it out, as most images on the web have a resolution of 72 dpi, which does not reproduce well when printed – unless, of course, that is part of your postmodern plan.)

Activity 4.16 There's an app for that

Work in groups to design and produce images or a video production that represents new media technology as art.

All designs, images footage, titles and editing must be undertaken using only your mobile phone. The soundtrack must be created on a phone too.

This task is really about finding creativity in mobile phone technology. Post your work on your class web page, or you could publish to a wider audience if you wish.

Activity 4.17 Blurring, sharpening or smudging is fun – but is it ethical?

- 1 Use a digital camera to shoot a series of images of your Media class at work. Choose one to enhance and, using post-production software, make alterations to the image that represent the truth of what studying media is like. Be subtle – this is an exercise in using image editing to enhance meaning, not change it.
- 2 Print your image and show it to members of your school community without revealing the alterations you have made. Ask them to comment on what the image says about the study of media. Once they have finished commenting, reveal the ways in which you have altered the image and your reasons for doing so. Ask your subjects what they think about the ethics of this exercise.
- 3 Collate all the responses that your class obtains and write a report on the representation of reality in a digital world.

Activity 4.18 Make a big whopper

- 1 Go to the website of your favourite fast-food franchise site and grab an image of a hamburger.
 - 2 Next time you buy this product, use your phone to take a shot of it after it has been unwrapped. You could also use images of real hamburgers found on the internet.
 - 3 Open both images and use your manipulation skills to make them look the same.
- Compare your results and discuss how the process of digital post-production alters reality.

So successful has been the camera's role in beautifying the world that photographs, rather than the world, have become the standard of the beautiful.

Susan Sontag

iStock.com/berekin



Figure 4.9 Personal transformation is now available to anyone with Photoshop.

Activity 4.19 Creature from the planet gorgeous

Have a classmate take a digital image of you right now, just as you are. Manipulate this image to enhance your best features and remove anything you don't like. Print the before and after images.

Analyse both images. Which is the real you? And what does 'the real you' mean?

ADVERTISING

The world of advertising is all about representation and technology. Creating advertisements and campaigns is a wonderful way to study the impact of different technologies on the technical and symbolic codes and conventions that advertisers use to promote products and ideas. The following activities are designed to develop skills in product promotion using your knowledge of representation and illustrate how changes in technologies have altered the production and consumption of media products.

ZOE KYPROS, ACCOUNT DIRECTOR AT ADVERTISING AGENCY BIG RED GROUP



Zoe Kypros

There are a lot of people and steps involved in creating a simple ad; however, success comes down to three core elements:

- the brief
- communication
- production process.

The brief

All advertisements start with a brief. A client will supply you with this based on their product marketing targets; however, it's your duty to interrogate the strategy and messaging to get a clear understanding of how best to communicate this.

Simple questions to ask yourself of any brief are:

- *What is the product/service?* Thoroughly understand what you are advertising, its competitive advantage in the marketplace and core product benefits.
- *Why are we doing this?* What is the opportunity? Are you wanting to sell more product, or educate your audience on a new service?

- *Who are we talking to?* Are they new or existing customers? What is their age bracket? What are their key behaviours?
- *What's the insight?* Is there any research or key information that will help connect to your audience to advertise more effectively, such as price sensitivities or media habits?
- *What is the core message?* This needs to be true and compelling; for instance, 'Get the Netflix app and be entertained anywhere'.
- *What is the call to action?* What do you want your audience to do with this new information? Go online and buy, or speak to a specialist in-store? They can then follow through to purchase.
- *What are the production deliverables?* Are you creating a radio script, a print ad, or is this going to be digital marketing only? What are the specs for this?

Communication

Have a briefing session with your creative team or designer on the brief and the overall production deliverables. Your team can ask questions, understand the greater task at hand and clarify timings they need to adhere to.





Communication doesn't stop here. When you communicate clearly and often, production will be best placed for success.

Production process

In order for a campaign to flow smoothly, you need a solid workflow process. Each step is designed to ensure that the creative meets the brief, that the client is happy and that production quality is maintained. Any short cuts are at your peril, such as not checking specs and dispatching incorrect artwork.

When managing production, you need to be acutely aware of how much time you have to create and dispatch on deadline, and factor in a small buffer in case there is an unforeseen round of changes or a technical issue. The newspaper will not wait for you.

Read the extended version of Zoe's advice at NelsonNet.



Activity 4.20 How on earth are we going to get them to pay for something they can get for free?

Bottled water is everywhere. You probably have a bottle in your bag. Last century, if you had suggested there would be a market for a product we can get for free, you would have been thought of as mad. Today, competition for the water consumer dollar is fierce and the market is fickle.

Your task is to design and produce an ad campaign for bottled water. You can use an existing product or create a new one by designing your own packaging. The only restriction is that the product is water, pure and simple.

- 1 Design ads in any two media forms.
- 2 Pitch your campaign to your class, detailing how you will use the media production process and commenting on the challenges you expect to find working in different media forms.
- 3 Create the advertisements and evaluate how the technologies you used changed the nature of the representations you created.



Shutterstock.com/Billion Photos

Figure 4.10 How do you attract customers when you're selling a colourless, odourless liquid?

Activity 4.21 Promoting your school

Media classes are often asked to create a video, photographic sequence, website or ad campaign promoting the school. You must have seen these: smiling students sitting at computers, helping younger students, playing sport or musical instruments, or reading a good book. So sweet. So predictable. Soooo dull!!!

Okay, so now you know what you don't want to do, it's your turn. It's time for some creative representation.

Work in teams to design and create a promotional media product for your school. Think outside the box. What is it that really works at your school? What can you show and say that absolutely conveys the essence of everything good about your school, but avoids the tired old clichés?

Begin with your target market. Who is it? The usual market for school promotion is a mixture of current students, potential students, parents and the local community. What is it they need to know? How can you craft your message to reach these wide and perhaps disparate groups? What media, including social media, would really engage your target market?

Decide on the form of your product. Everyone expects students to make 30- or 60-second ads, but what could you do that is different? Perhaps you could try a documentary or an infotainment spot for TV. How about an Instagram or Snapchat story? Photo montages can be very ordinary or, with a bit of creative thinking, they can be fabulous. Where would you publish them? Choose your own





adventure – website, computer game or social media are all possibilities. There are plenty of ideas. You just have to be out there!

Decide on your style. Sometimes less is more, sometimes more is more. Are you going for a classy look, or perhaps a humorous one? Even mystery might work.

Design and create your ultimate promotional product. When you have finished, ask your school council for a few minutes to demonstrate your concepts. You never know, they might just go for them.

Good luck!

Activity 4.22 DIY your own PSA campaign

In Chapter 3 we looked at the ‘Dumb Ways to Die’ campaign. Public service advertising (PSA) has a long history of success in Australia with campaigns such as ‘Slip, Slop, Slap’, ‘Girls Make Your Move’ and ‘R U OK?’. Work in production teams to design and create a PSA campaign for an issue that you identify as important to young people.

Your campaign should include advertisements and information in several media forms to be distributed where your target market will be engaged by it. Use Zoe Kypros’s advice above to help you design and produce your campaign.

WHEN SEEING IS NOT BELIEVING: REPRESENTATIONS THROUGH SOUND

Sound carries meaning in more ways than simply by accompanying a visible object or person.

<http://filmsound.org>

We live in a visual world, yet sound remains one of our most important senses. Filmmakers know this, which is why they devote so much attention to sound design. While audiences are conscious of the impact of dialogue, voice-over, music and sound effects in constructing representations, they are less aware of the other, often more subtle, sounds that suggest meaning. Listen to your favourite film with your eyes closed to note the complexity of the soundtrack and the meanings it suggests.

Audiences and filmmakers enter into a ‘contract of convention’, where certain sounds are understood to represent characters, personalities, locations, moods, emotions, ideas and plot development. Sound in film suggests an emotional realism that becomes a powerful representational tool.

A **soundscape** is an immersive aural environment. While there are many versions of this form, at its heart a soundscape is an edited collection of sounds representing an idea. Listening to a soundscape brings the audience to an understanding of the nature of its subject; think of them as aural landscapes.

Soundscapes sometimes include voice or music, but rarely dialogue. They are aural representations at their most pure. Follow the weblink to listen to some, and then why not create one?



Activity 4.23 Immerse your audience in sound

Think of an idea or location that could be conveyed through the use of sound only. Here are some suggestions, or you can choose one of your own:

- school
- your Media class
- a beautiful day
- conflict
- multiculturalism
- your family.

Plan for your soundscape by listening to your subject. What can you hear? What is natural sound? What will need enhancement? Think about rhythm and pace.

- 1 Use a digital recorder or your phone to capture the sounds you will need. Record each element of your soundscape separately. If your soundscape is a location, make a recording of its ambient sound.
- 2 Create your soundscape by editing your sound files together using software such as Audacity.
- 3 Share your soundscape with your classmates and make notes of their comments.
- 4 Use these comments to enhance your production. Then make a podcast and publish it on the internet.

REPRESENTATION OF SELF: MORE THAN JUST SELFIES

As you learnt in Chapter 3, self-representation has been around since the first cave paintings and has long been a feature of fine art, but these days it gets very bad press. The activities that follow will show how important and creative self-representation can be.

The painter constructs, the photographer discloses.

Susan Sontag

Activity 4.24 Representation of self through flat lay

A **flat lay** is a photograph of objects laid out on a flat surface that is shot from above. The selection and arrangement of objects is used to represent ideas or people. The style has become popular in magazines and social media. Google 'flat lay' to get the idea and to read more about how this photographic style became so popular.

Choose a range of objects that represent you. These objects could be clothing and accessories, things you own or tools that represent your hobbies. Select a suitable background and arrange the objects symbolically to construct the real you. Are you a neat freak? If so, your flat lay will be arranged symmetrically. Do you want to say you are creative? The selection and arrangement of your objects will demonstrate this.

Shoot your layout from above. A stepladder may help. Flat lays are usually shot in bright even lighting to minimise shadow. Natural afternoon lighting is often the best.

Give your image to your teacher, who can share them anonymously with the class.

Have fun guessing who created each image.



Activity 4.25 Meme me

Memes are great fun, but have you ever thought about their deeper role in representing a cultural or social idea? Most memes are captioned images that are intended to be funny while pointing out silly aspects of human behaviour. Many are created to make a political or philosophical point. Memes are constructed using codes and conventions particular to the media form, such as the use of the font Impact in capitals with an outer stroke.

Using images of yourself or your pets, create a meme that is both funny and makes a social or political point.



Activity 4.26 Video montage: me – but I’m not there

Design and create a short video montage that constructs a self-representation without you appearing in the production. Use objects, locations, props, lighting, sound, editing and pace to create the essential you. Ask your teacher to screen everyone’s work anonymously, and work as critical friends (see page 49) to help each other improve.



istock.com/oneinchpunch

Activity 4.27 Selfies and human agency

Agency is about acting in the world to produce a particular effect or exercise power. Those who have agency have the ability to make choices and act on them. Recent research into selfies is good news. Psychologists have found that, instead of spreading body dissatisfaction, FOMO and duck-faced self-indulgence, the selfie phenomenon has a range of other effects, including building happiness by empowering people to see and own difference and diversity while challenging traditional beauty norms. Read the *ScienceDaily* article ‘Study links selfies, happiness’ and the *Time* article ‘Our bodies, our selfies: the feminist photo revolution’ or *The Age* article ‘Selfies: why we just can’t get enough of ourselves’.

For this task, take at least one selfie every day for several weeks or months. You may like to choose a time, place or activity to capture each day, or you could create a theme of your own. As you work through this project, be aware that you are building a representational catalogue of yourself.

Design a method of displaying your images that represents you. For example, you could print the images and mount them in a grid or along a line, create a flip book, publish your work online, create a video montage or an Instagram story.

Reflect on the process and what you have learnt about yourself from this project. Include this reflection in your display.



Weblink

Activity 4.28 The ‘My place’ project

There is a long tradition of fine art books that represent ideas about self through images of people’s personal space with accompanying text. For this activity, your class will design and produce a class coffee table book or Instagram page modelled on this genre. Each student will create one page that represents them through an image of their personal space and a piece of accompanying text. How you interpret the idea of personal space is up to you, but it could include your bedroom, a place you like to hang out, or some other symbol or theme to represent self.

A convention of this form of artwork is that images are similar in their use of the codes and conventions of image composition, such as framing. Text is usually written in the first person, as if the author is speaking to the reader. Each page is consistent in terms of layout and typography. You should decide on these design elements before you begin.

Print your book double-sided on high-quality paper stock to reflect the conventions of the genre, or print each page and display them as a layout on a wall in your classroom as a lasting reminder of the productions completed during Unit 1.

MAKING AN AUSTRALIAN STORY

While all of the activities in this chapter are, of course, Australian stories, it can be a challenge creating a story that symbolically and authentically represents Australia without reverting to cliché. What story can you tell? What technical and symbolic codes and conventions can you use that convey a sense of Australianness without reverting to the tried and true symbols of Australia?

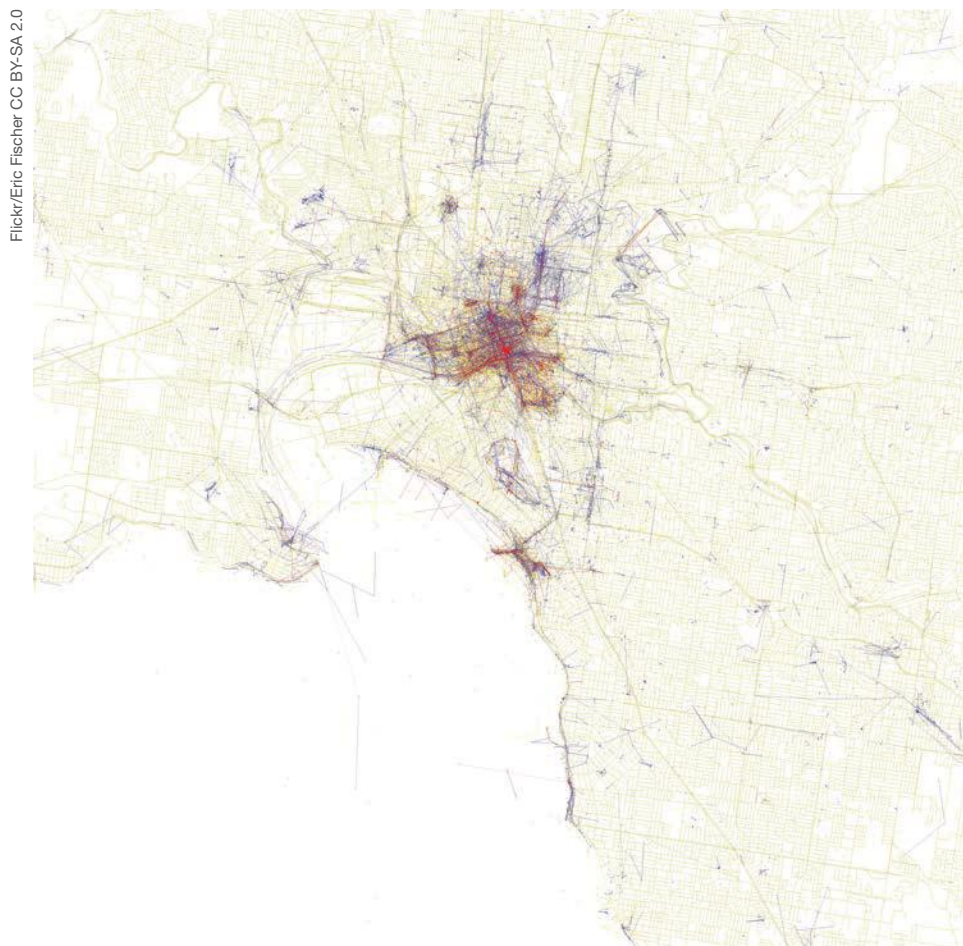


Figure 4.11 Eric Fischer's map of Melbourne

Activity 4.29 Stories and place

Many stories are about place. This task uses the idea that places can become so familiar to audiences that stories around them are often stereotyped or clichéd because photographers and filmmakers create images that are just like every other image of that location. The activity will challenge this approach and is informed by geotagged location maps of popular sites around Melbourne.

Map geek Eric Fischer has created a series of maps based on geotagged images that have been uploaded to Flickr. The maps are colour-coded: red indicates that tourists captured the image, blue indicates that it was created by a local, yellow means that the image origin is not clear.

Fischer's map of Melbourne (see Figure 4.11) reveals the locations of the most popular photographic sites. Your task is to design and create two sets of images or two video montages, one clichéd and the other creative, that express a story about a well-known location.

Begin by searching for and evaluating existing images. Classify them into stereotypical or clichéd images and those that express a creative approach. Use these images and Google Street View to plan your shoot.

Design and create a series of images or shots that conform to clichéd representations of the location as well as a series that breaks the clichés while still identifying the location. You will need to be flexible on the shoot as new possibilities for original representations occur to you.

Create a Flickr or Instagram page to display everyone's images and videos.





Shutterstock.com/Korkusung



iStock.com/LisaInGlasses

Figure 4.12 Clichéd or not, Flinders Street Station is a popular place for photographers.

Activity 4.30 Aussie stories for Aussie teens

Refer to Chapter 5 for information on the themes and codes and conventions that suggest an Australian story to Australian audiences. Use this learning to help you think about how you will design and create a production that tells an authentic story about what it is like to be a teenager in Australia today. Use a brainstorm to identify and link themes and issues in Australian teenage life. Think about how the symbolic and technical codes and conventions of the media form in which you will work can be used to create a story about teenage life.

Who will be your audience and what do you want to say to them? How do you want your audience to think, feel or act as they experience your story?

Create a proposal and pitch it to your teacher. When you get the go-ahead, design and produce this very important story and then share it – in your school community, with your family, online and in film festivals. Make your story count.



OUTCOME 3

On completion of this unit the student should be able to analyse how the structural features of Australian fictional and non-fictional narratives in two or more media forms engage, and are consumed and read by, audiences.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 3.

KEY KNOWLEDGE

- the structure of Australian fictional and non-fictional media stories arising from cultural histories and institutions
- media codes and conventions used to engage audiences and communicate meaning
- the influence of the style of media creators and producers in the construction of fictional and non-fictional narratives
- the impact of institutional, economic, social and political constraints on the production and distribution of fictional and non-fictional narratives
- how audience engagement with and reception of narratives is affected by their expectation, consumption and prior reading of a range of fictional and non-fictional narratives in a range of contexts
- media language.

KEY SKILLS

- analyse structures in Australian fictional and non-fictional media stories arising from cultural histories and institutions
- analyse media codes and conventions used to engage audiences and communicate meaning
- analyse the construction of narratives through the fictional and non-fictional style of media creators and producers
- analyse the impact of institutional, economic, social and political constraints on the production and distribution of fictional and non-fictional narratives
- discuss factors which impact on audience engagement and reception, such as consumption and prior reading of narratives in a range of contexts
- use media language.

Students study a range of narratives in two or more media forms, exploring the context and features of their construction and how they are consumed and read by audiences. Narratives selected for study must be by Australian media creators and producers with primarily Australian content. A definition of Australian television programs appears on pages 134 and 135. This definition will guide you in the selection of narratives for study.

Area of Study Outcomes, Key Knowledge and Key Skills points are reproduced by permission from the VCE Media Study Design (2018–2022), © VCAA.

THERE ARE AS MANY APPROACHES TO THIS AREA OF STUDY AS THERE ARE STORIES

In this area of study, you will analyse how Australian fictional and non-fictional narratives are constructed in two or more media forms. You will also evaluate how these stories engage and are read by audiences. There are many possible approaches to achieving this outcome.

The stories selected for analysis may have been created in any media form, including film, television, radio, print, photography, games, advertising or websites. It is possible to study two longer texts or a collection of smaller ones; your teacher will guide you in this. Both fiction and non-fiction stories will be analysed. Some texts may combine elements of both. It is possible to study a range of stories or the same story told across different media forms.

Some stories selected for analysis might be in the form of iconic and much-revered texts, while others could be very recent or even emerging as you learn about this area of study. You will analyse how the codes and conventions in media forms construct meaning and perhaps compare their use across different forms and/or texts. This will prepare you for your work in Units 2 and 3. You will examine style, the impact of media producers and the context in which the stories have been created.

Stories are often a product of our history and may be told and retold across time. Others arise out of news, an event or even a sporting contest. Some are fantasy; others rely on realism for impact. All stories are created within particular economic, institutional, social and political circumstances, which affects how they are created and circulated.

When studying audiences, you will examine the target audience of the story and yourself as an audience. For some stories, you may be both; for others, the story will have been created for an audience with which you are unfamiliar. How stories are read by audiences differs between individuals and groups as well as by location, gender and age.

Your teacher will decide on the approach your class will take. This chapter is designed to support your learning by providing information about how to approach any of the above possibilities. Australian stories are, and have always been, a 'choose your own adventure'.

STORIES ARE CONSTRUCTED USING TECHNICAL AND SYMBOLIC CODES AND CONVENTIONS

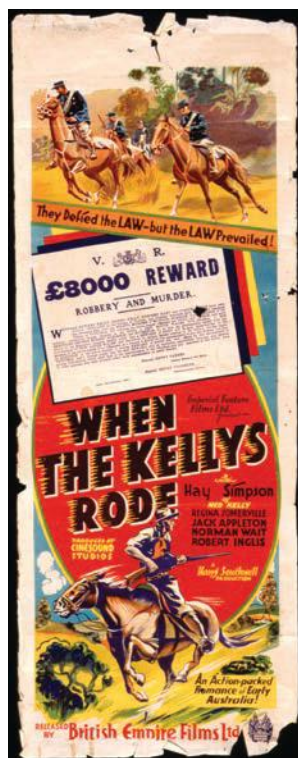
All stories are constructed using technical and symbolic codes and conventions. Some codes and conventions, such as the use of camera angles and typography, are common across many media forms; others, such as the ordering of information in a print news story, are specific to one media form. The list of codes and conventions on page 12 is your 'go to' guide to understanding how story and production codes and conventions are used in conjunction with one another to construct narratives that engage audiences. Some codes and conventions are related to story; others are related to media production – how the story is constructed. Think of them working together with the audience like an equation:

$$\text{story} + \text{production} + \text{audience} = \text{narrative}$$

Each of the codes and conventions listed in the table is a starting point for thinking about how meaning is created in narratives. There is so much that can be said about each one that it is impossible to cover them in one place. Detailed explanations of media codes and conventions occur throughout this textbook. You will find yourself looking backwards and forwards to help you in your analysis.

Codes and conventions that symbolise Australia

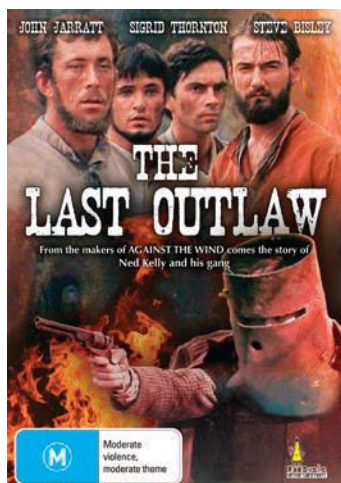
It would be easy to create a list of symbolic representations of Australia, just as the image on the next page has done. But doing so would mean resorting to cliché and denying the complexity of representations that are used to create Australian stories. We all love our Aussie symbols, but this area of study is so much more than koalas, surfing and boomerangs. Australian stories are about our land, our people and our lives. Think about how the media constructs typical Australian characters, such as mums and dads, children and teenagers, Australian workers and workplaces, our land, homes and suburbs, and of course the lives and stories of everyday Australians. There might be some surfing, but that is only part of who we are.



Poster, 'When the Kellys Rode' (film), Australia, c 1930s, Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences <<https://ma.as/23373>> Collection: Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences



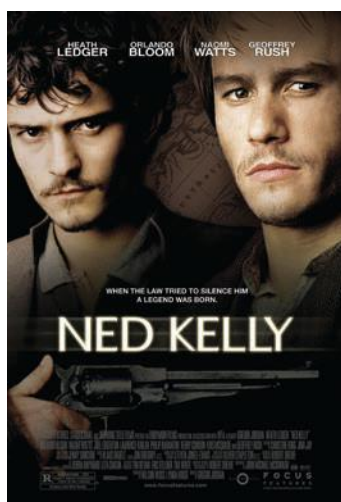
Getty Images/Movie Poster Image Art/ Contributor



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Serious Entertainment



Alamy Stock Photo/AF archive

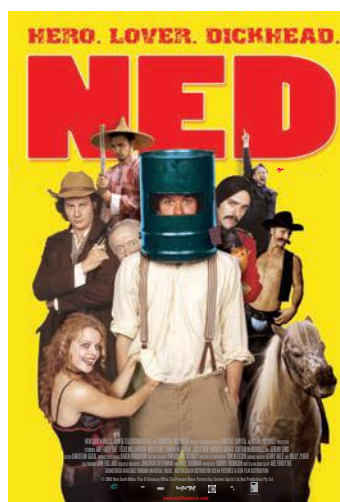


Image courtesy of Sherman Pictures

Figure 5.2 You can tell much about the development of Australian stories by studying one that has been remade many times over.

MEDIA STORIES ARE CONTEXTUAL AND THE CONTEXT CHANGES ACROSS TIME

The story of the Kelly gang has been made into a film or television text about once every decade since the first iteration in 1906. Study the posters in Figure 5.2. Narratives reflect the time and place in which they were created, even if they are set in another time. By analysing the representations of Ned Kelly in film posters, we can begin to determine how Australian society has changed across each decade. Australians have always enjoyed the story of the Kelly gang, yet while Ned's depiction has inevitably been as a flawed outlaw hero, the motivation for his actions as represented in film has shifted subtly across time as Australian values have developed. You may want to watch trailers or search for information about how these film narratives represent the Kelly gang.

Activity 5.1 The Kelly gang legend lives

How would the story of the Kelly gang be told today?

Work in groups or alone to reimagine the story of the Kelly gang as told in a contemporary format today. Choose one of the following:

- video game
- social media such as Tumblr, Instagram or Snapchat
- YouTube channel
- blog.

Create a map of how the story will be told in the form you have chosen and create some content for the story, such as images, storyboards, graphics or text.

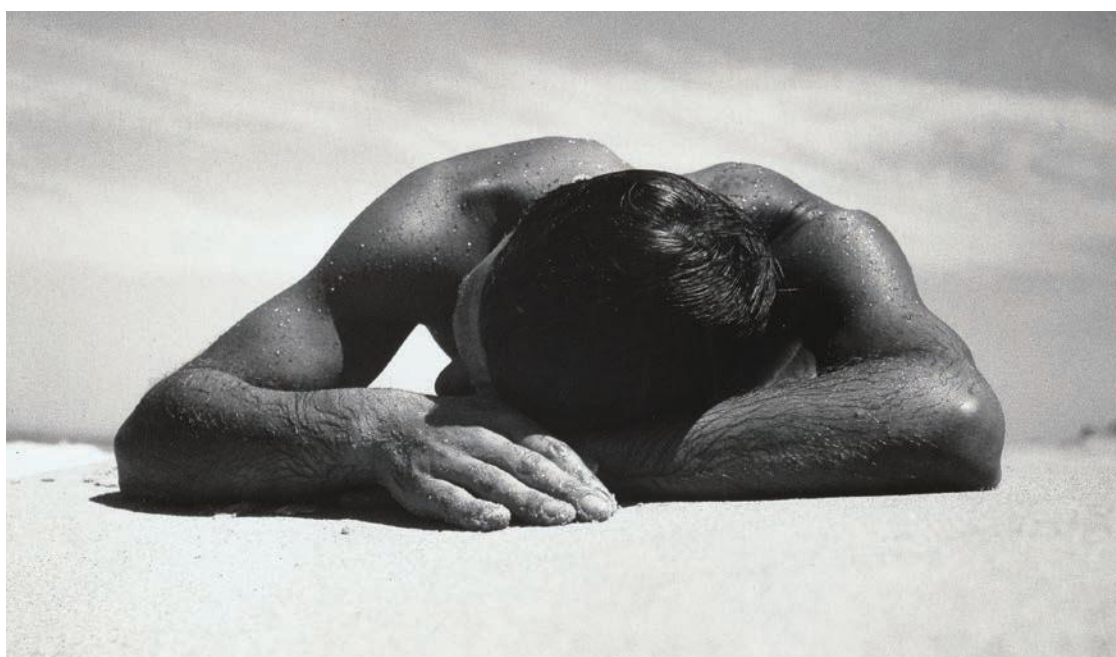
Share your work with your classmates.

AUSTRALIAN STORIES COME IN MANY FORMS

When we think of Australian stories, we tend to think of films and television texts, but stories are evident in every media form. Study the iconic image in Figure 5.3. Max Dupain (1911–1992) was one of Australia's most revered photographers. His photography not only documented Australian life in the 20th century but was influential in creating some of the stories we still hold dear today. Why not try it? Use the image below to tell stories to your classmates about the beach. Notice how easily the stories emerge. This image speaks to Australians. Follow the weblink to see more of Dupain's Australian stories.



Weblink



National Gallery of Australia

Figure 5.3 Max Dupain, *Sunbaker*, 1937, Gelatin silver photograph printed image 38.6 × 43.4 cm sheet 52.8 × 55 cm National Gallery of Australia, Canberra Purchased 1976

WHAT DOES THE TERM 'AUSTRALIAN STORY' MEAN TO YOU?

What is an Australian story? Is it about endless beaches and sun-bronzed surfers? Perhaps when you think of an Australian story you think of the outback or the Sydney Harbour Bridge or the Great Barrier Reef. Does *Kenny* (2006) or *Red Dog* (2011) come to mind?

Would you think of Baz Luhrmann's *The Great Gatsby* (2013) as Australian? It is an Australian film, but not an Australian story. Even though *The Great Gatsby* was set in New York and based on an iconic American novel, director Baz Luhrmann shot the film in Sydney with a largely Australian crew. This makes it technically an Australian film, but not an Australian story. In this area of study, not all Australian texts constitute Australian stories, even if they are made in Australia. The texts selected for study should be made by Australian media creators and producers and feature primarily Australian content.



Figure 5.4 Sydney becomes New York in *The Great Gatsby*, but it is not an Australian story.

Stories are about our values

Australian stories are all of these things, but they are also about the everyday. They are about us, the way we live and our **values**.

Values are those beliefs that describe what society sees as how we should live our lives – the unwritten rules by which a culture lives. Australian values express how Australians see themselves and their lives. Our values are embedded in our everyday experience; they dictate what we would describe as normal behaviour. Values may be so transparent that they can exist without us even realising their impact; they are just the way we are.

Values are the core of society and the basis of our laws – they help us make sense of our lives. Our social systems and institutions are based on our values, as are our media products. Values are reflected in our behaviour but are also partly aspirational – they are what we aspire to be and do, even if we don't always live up to our goals.

Popular media products generally reflect the values of the time and place in which they were created. If audiences like them, it is because they support the values on which the story and characters are based, even if that character is a penguin.

What are Australian values?

Australians share many values with the rest of the world; after all, many values are universal. However, we also have values that we consider our own or that we express in an Australian way. Here is a list of values that you will be familiar with and will recognise in your life and media. Add to the list if you like.

- Australians are honest, loyal, open to others and to new ideas.
- We tolerate and respect difference in others.

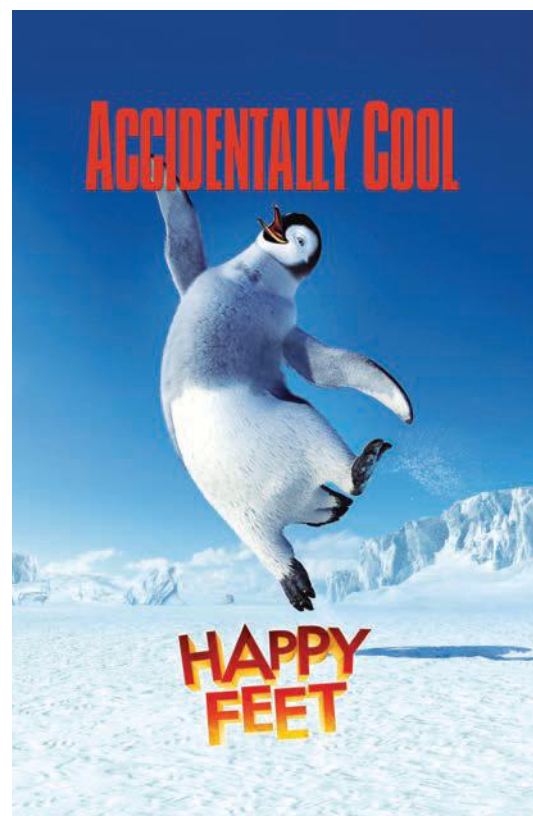


Figure 5.5 George Miller's *Happy Feet* (2006) is Australian, even if he doesn't sound like it.

- Everyone should have the freedom to express themselves and to live their life as they wish.
- All people are equal and deserve equal rights and opportunities.
- Everyone deserves a fair go.
- Australians look after their mates.
- We take care of those in need.
- Multiculturalism makes Australia a better place.
- Family is the most important unit in society.
- Working hard means we, our family and the country are better off.

When you begin to analyse the codes and conventions that construct meaning in Australian media, you will see that our values underpin almost all stories, from epic tales such as Baz Luhrmann's *Australia* (2008) to horror such as *Wake in Fright* (1971 and 2017) and the *Wolf Creek* series (2016–17). Domestic dramas such as *House Husbands* (2012–) and quirky comedies such as *Down Under* (2016) and *The Family Law* (2016–17) all have Australian values at their heart.



Figure 5.6 Whether set in the outback or suburban Cronulla, Australian values are at the heart of Australian films.



Figure 5.7 *Lion* represents both universal and Australian values.

It is important to remember that Australian stories are not all clichéd outback sagas or ocker fests. For every clichéd film or television program, there are many more stories that are also authentically Australian but very different. *Lion* (2016), directed by Garth Davis, ticks many Australian values boxes, but its themes of family, determination, love and loss are also universal.

The top 10 highest grossing films in Australian cinemas give some clues as to the values of Australian audiences, but these figures do not take into account DVD and Blu-ray sales, which, for many films, particularly recent ones, far exceed box-office takings. *The Castle* (1997), for example, is one of the industry's greatest commercial successes due to continuing DVD sales, remaining popular precisely because it speaks to Australian values. With the exception of *The Great Gatsby*, any of the films listed on the next page would make an excellent text to study for this outcome or as one of your texts for Unit 2 Outcome 1 (Chapter 6).

- *Crocodile Dundee* (1986) – \$ 47 707 045
- *Australia* (2008) – \$37 555 757
- *Babe* (1995) – \$36 776 544
- *Happy Feet* (2006) – \$31 786 164
- *Moulin Rouge!* (2001) – \$27 734 406
- *The Great Gatsby* (2013) – \$27 383 762
- *Crocodile Dundee II* (1988) – \$24 916 805
- *Strictly Ballroom* (1992) – \$21 760 400
- *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015) – \$21 685 344
- *Red Dog* (2011) – \$21 467 993

It should be noted that only the top three films above appear in the 50 highest grossing films in Australia's history. Why do you think this is the case?



Weblink



News Ltd/NewsPix

Figure 5.8 *The Castle*, built on Australian values

Activity 5.2 Aussie, Aussie, Aussie?

What constitutes an Australian media text? Is it the funding, the content, the producers, the actors, the location, or some native flora and fauna thrown in for effect?

Draw up a list of all the ways you think an Australian text could be defined, and then conduct a survey to find out what others think. Share your list with your classmates, and create a class poster that illustrates your findings.

You will find the Australian Government ruling on what constitutes an Australian TV program set out on page 135. It makes very interesting (if slightly complex) reading. Read this definition and compare it with the findings from your research.

Screen Australia provides information about Australian films and television programs that have been released to video. Study the data by following the weblink to find a text that would be interesting to analyse.

Stephanie Bunbury's article on the next page describes the role of Australian film in Australian life, as does David Stratton's documentary *Stories of Australian Cinema*, which can be found on iView. As you read and watch, think about how Australian narratives have changed your life.



Weblink

AUSTRALIA DAY 2017: WHAT OUR SCREEN HEROES TELL US ABOUT OURSELVES

When the Australian Film Development Corporation was founded under the Gorton government in 1970, its stated purpose was to generate Australian content at a point when Australian film production was at its lowest ebb. Five years later, it was given more heft as the Australian Film Commission and presided over the burst of production that would immediately become known as Australia's film renaissance.

Picnic at Hanging Rock (1975), *Sunday Too Far Away* (1975) and *The Devil's Playground* (1976) were 'telling our stories', according to the buzz-talk of the time. They were confronting the longstanding 'cultural cringe' with local history and home-grown myth, 'holding up a mirror' that allowed Australians to see their own reflected images rather than American or British ones.

So what do we see in that looking glass now? The Australian hero is not what he was: the shearers, cattlemen and bushrangers of the '70s new wave have mostly given way to less self-consciously iconic characters. Criminals. Animals, such as Babe the pig, the penguins in *Happy Feet* and of course Australia's collective best friend, the Red Dog. Men in tights. Men in frocks. Gothic ferals and heavy trucks in the *Mad Max* franchise; glamorous impressions of old movie stars in the Baz Luhrmann films (*Australia*, *Moulin Rouge!*) which are a sort of camp, extravagant genre in their own right.

There is only a handful of films about women, despite the fact that the cinema audience is predominantly female. For international audiences, Australian cinema is defined by those unfortunate picnickers at Hanging Rock on the one hand and sad, chubby Muriel on the other. But we don't see them as representative of anything. Miranda, the disappearing schoolgirl in *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, is 'like a Botticelli angel': so remote she simply evanesces. And nobody wants to be or know Muriel, even though we all recognise her. She is absolutely Other. And they have few successors, despite the fact that those they do have – *The Dressmaker* (2015),

The Sapphires (2012) – have pulled good audiences. The archetypal Australian hero is not a heroine.

If this is representative of a broader sexism – and of course it is – there are any number of efforts to counter it. Screen Australia's Gender Matters project has drawn attention to figures such as the fact that only 16 per cent of Australian directors are women. (For perspective, the figure in Hollywood is just 7 per cent.) On screen, kudos goes to George Miller for making the blockbuster female-friendly. *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015) stars a woman behind its biggest wheel; it also has a plethora of ancillary female characters who are fabulously colourful, such as the motorcycling elderly women who are preserving the world's edible plants in their handbags.

The redoubtable Charlize Theron is, however, a Hollywood star. She is not us; we are not her. If any character in that film shouts 'Aussie, Aussie, Aussie' at us, it's that glam-rock bloke on the back of the baddies' truck thrashing a giant guitar. That's us, all right: the noisy larrikin who's going along with trouble for the ride. And who is, for some deep Freudian reason that he almost certainly has no interest in exploring, into a bit of cross-dressing.

So who is 'us'? You know that already. By a long, long way, *Crocodile Dundee* remains the big Australian, with local takings in 1986 of \$47 million on a budget of \$11.5 million and a record-breaking 23.5 per cent share of the total box office. Paul Hogan, a cheerful rigger who had made his name in a series of cigarette commercials, encapsulated all the winning elements that had caught the public imagination in a sprinkling of earlier Australian films. He had the cheek of Chips Rafferty and the dash of Errol Flynn; the innocent awkwardness around women of *The Sentimental Bloke* (1919) and the can-do cheerfulness of the builders who take a cultivated Italian immigrant into their beery fold in *They're a Weird Mob* (1966). And he could conquer a crocodile. Like Dad and Dave, he was fighting the endless battle in, of and against the bush.

Hogan's likeable joker may have had a unique super-power with saurians, but in other respects Mick Dundee became the template for 'real Australians': heroes decently unconscious of their own hero status, ready with a joke for every occasion, who aren't up themselves and never, ever whinge. Versions of this character pop up in most Australian films. Admittedly, not many people actually go to see them; Australian films accounted for 7.2 per cent of the box office in 2015, with even this small slice consisting largely of *Mad Max: Fury Road* and *The Dressmaker* sales. These low figures, however, can be misleading; more of us are looking in the mirror than they suggest.

In an interesting piece on Australia's box office successes on the website New Daily, George Lekakis points out that some films that don't do well in cinemas have a disproportionate popularity in people's lounge rooms (which is where, after all, we now do 84 per cent of our movie-watching). The example he cites is *The Castle* (1997), a film that made only \$10 million on release but, thanks to home viewings, is now one of the local industry's biggest commercial successes. And if there is one film that captures a particular Australian spirit – and creates a peculiarly Australian hero in Michael Caton's comically uxorious, plane-spotting paterfamilias Darryl Kerrigan – it is this story of a suburban clan that won't be moved.

Caton is a maestro of this kind of unsung working-class hero. Two years ago he starred in *Last Cab to Darwin*, third in the Australian box-office rankings in 2015. Caton's Rex lives in the mining town of Broken Hill but, as a cab driver, he's just another suburban bloke. As such, he is stereotypically flawed. Rex has a bunch of drinking mates, a longstanding clandestine companion – kept under wraps ostensibly because she is Indigenous, but probably largely because he is terrified of any entanglement – and doesn't tell anyone when he is diagnosed with imminently fatal cancer. The point is that, on the road to Darwin, he learns to acknowledge how





much his woman, his friends and his dog mean to him. He learns to live up to his own inherent decency.

Kenny's another one. The eponymous hero of a spoof documentary about a plumber who sets up and maintains portable toilets – played by Shane Jacobson, the director's brother – loves his work, loves his son and suffers the contempt of his father, his ex-wife and some of his more odious customers without complaint. Not that he's defenceless – he has a turn of local phrase

and arsenal of poo jokes to rival Barry Mackenzie's – but like any proper hero, he uses that verbal power only for good. Equally importantly, he is oblivious to the fact that the air hostess who asks him out three days in a row is interested in him. We don't like a Lothario in Australia. Not on our screens, anyway.

So that's what the mirror tells us. Do your job well, be fair, be kind, don't belly-ache. It's not exactly inclusive, since it's not addressed to women. As a world view, it does lack nuance. Even so, it's not a

bad way to be. In other circumstances – in Gallipoli, say – Kenny would be a good person to have next to you in a foxhole, but few of us are living that kind of life. Australia Day, which used to be a sort of blank at the end of the summer holidays when people had barbecues and labelled schoolbooks for the coming term, is now mired in pomposity and flag-waving. That doesn't seem to have much to do with suburban life. Better just to celebrate being a good bloke.

Stephanie Bunbury, *The Age*, 20 January 2017

CULTURAL CRINGE OR A FAIR GO?

Criticising the quality of Australian media products in comparison to those produced overseas remains fashionable among some audiences. Critics are often heard to declare that Australian films or TV programs are inferior to texts from the United States and the United Kingdom. They cite the production values of overseas texts as evidence of Australian inferiority. Another argument is that Australian filmmakers are not in the same creative league as their overseas counterparts and should lift their game. A commonly used example of the supposed inferiority of the Australian film industry is the New Zealand *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (2001–03), which was compared with those Australian films made at the same time, such as the AFI Award-winning films *Lantana* (2001), *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (2002) and *Japanese Story* (2003).

Such criticism is based on the erroneous assumption that Australian texts and those from the English-speaking countries from which we import most media content are somehow created equal. This is not the case, as the relative costs of production of the above films reveals.

To equate *The Lord of the Rings* with *Rabbit-Proof Fence* is unfair and misrepresents both. *The Lord of the Rings* was certainly made in New Zealand by New Zealander Peter Jackson, but it was not financed with New Zealand money – it was financed in the United States. The films *Rabbit-Proof Fence* and *The Lord of the Rings* were made for different markets and were created under very different financial models overseen by different corporate structures. A better comparison would be *The Lord of the Rings* and *Mission: Impossible* or *The Matrix* – both made in Australia, but definitely not Australian films.

When comparing the quality of Australian film and TV texts with those from overseas, it is important to consider genre and audience as well as budget. For a valid assessment of the relative quality of texts, compare those made for equivalent markets and with similar budgets.

Not everyone agrees that we should suffer a cultural cringe. After all, how many well-publicised US blockbusters have you seen that were rubbish? Perhaps it is time to take a closer look at the quality of Australian cinema. Luke Buckmaster certainly thinks so.

His *Guardian* article 'Australian cinema's lost wave: the renaissance nobody's noticed' argues that recent Australian films go unregarded because they do not fit neatly into the genres we expect to see at the cinema. He notes that film critic Margaret Pomeranz selected five films released since 2005 in her top 10 Australian films of all time.

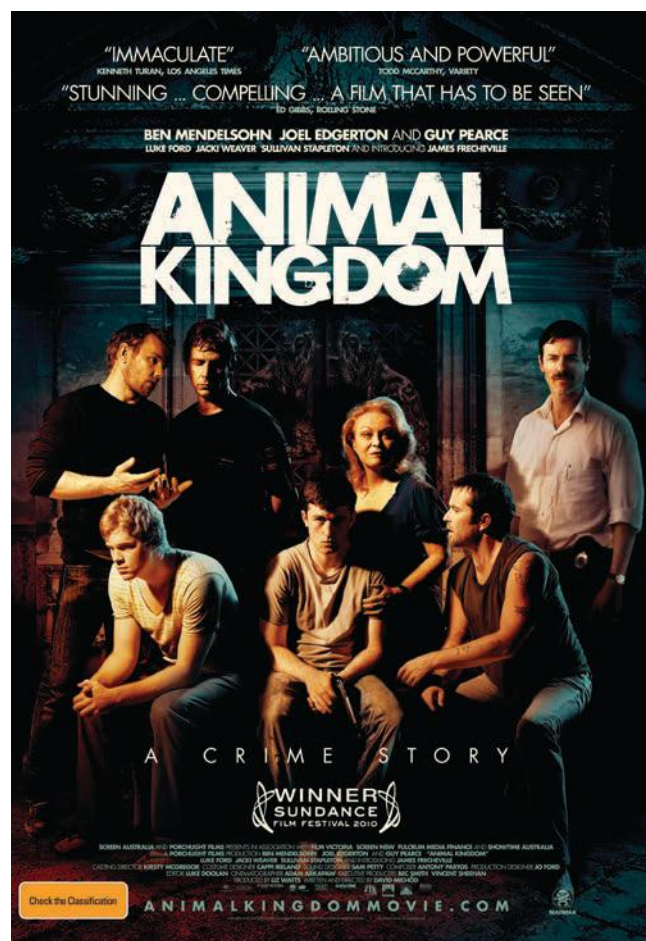


Figure 5.9 *Animal Kingdom* (2010)



Figure 5.10 *Upper Middle Bogan* shares its premise with *Modern Family*, but its story is very Australian.



Figure 5.11 Does the inclusion of some native fauna make a text Australian?

Because Australian media texts are made for a much smaller market, producers do not have access to the same resources as those in the United States or United Kingdom. *Modern Family* and *Upper Middle Bogan* are both family sitcoms based on the relationship between family members with a difference. It is unfair to compare them; they have been made with hugely different budgets because they can be distributed to markets that are vastly different in size. A more legitimate comparison would be to compare texts that are made with similar budgets – perhaps those made for smaller local audiences in the United States or the United Kingdom. Or we could compare texts made in Australia with those made in countries with an equivalent population or audience.

Finally, there is always a tendency to glamorise or glorify what we don't know, and to discount the familiar just because we know it and it seems so ordinary. Be careful of this inverted snobbery. If you are tempted to criticise a TV program or film because it is Australian, ask yourself: Would I make the same comments if the text was promoted as a Danish subtitled arthouse drama? When warranted, by all means criticise Australian media texts, but make sure that you are being fair to the text. 'A fair go' is the value on which Australia and Australian media texts should be read.



Figure 5.12 The first photograph published in an Australian newspaper, the body of Kelly gang member Joe Byrne strung up outside the Benalla jail. Photo: JW Lindt, 1880.

How does Australia compare?

Let's look at some data about the size of the Australian film industry compared with other countries. On average, there are around 35 feature films released in Australia every year. This equates to 0.15 films per 100 000 people. In India, the largest film industry in the world, 1200 feature films are released each year, which equates to only 0.09 per 100 000 people. The 800 feature films released in the United States equate to 0.25 films per 100 000. However, America produces films for international distribution, unlike Australia and India, where films are primarily made for local consumption.

A LITTLE HISTORY ... OF AUSTRALIAN STORIES

Studying stories from our past can inform our understanding of today. We tend to think that stories are always new, and while this is true, it is amazing to realise that the same narratives often appear over and over in our media. Sometimes the construction of these stories has changed very little. This is because Australian stories reflect Australian culture and our media has built a strong tradition of storytelling practices.

Read all about it!

Newspapers are the oldest media form in Australia, although the first newspaper photograph, which was of a Kelly gang member, did not appear until 1880 (see Figure 5.12).

One of the best places to find Australian stories is in the newspaper. Australia's first newspaper was published in Sydney in 1803. Read the first edition of the *Sydney Gazette* to learn about the stories of the time. The first Victorian newspaper, the *Melbourne Advertiser*, was published in 1838. *The Herald* began in 1940 and merged with the *Sun News Pictorial* in 1990 to become the *Herald Sun*. *The Age* began in 1854. You can access copies of historical newspapers by following the weblink.



Weblink

The Herald Sun is owned by multinational corporation News Corp but positions itself as a Victorian newspaper. It features local stories, particularly in the areas of crime, sport and entertainment. The content of the *Herald Sun* tends to be conservative in tone across both news and opinion pages. With print circulation figures of around 850 000 and an estimated readership of 1.3 million and online views of 2.5 million each day, the *Herald Sun* is a significant contributor to Australian culture through its stories.

The Age has a print readership of around 570 000 and a digital reach of more than 2 million across all platforms. It is owned by Fairfax and has a more progressive outlook in its coverage of news, business and current affairs than the *Herald Sun*, as is expected by its readers, who comprise a more middle-class demographic. A feature of stories in *The Age* is its tradition of investigative journalism.

It is an interesting exercise to analyse how the different social and political stances of the *Herald Sun* and *The Age* shape the structural features of each of the newspapers as a whole and the different styles of reportage evident in both news and opinion pages. The front pages below cover the same stories, but very differently.

Fairfax Syndication/The Age



News Ltd / NewsPix

Activity 5.3 Same news, different stories

Collect examples of the types of stories the *Herald Sun* and *The Age* publish: news, opinion, images, cartoons, letters to the editor and editorials. Make notes about where these appear in the print edition and in the digital edition.

Compare coverage in each category. Analyse how each story is constructed through the use of the symbolic and technical codes and conventions that each newspaper uses to construct meaning.

Choose a controversial news story that is covered in both the *Herald Sun* and *The Age*. Analyse how the use of written codes and conventions structures meaning in each. Create a poster that illustrates how the same story differs across both newspapers.

Write a brief report about the differences in style and content between the *Herald Sun* and *The Age*. To what do you attribute these differences?

The grand old dame of Australian stories

The *Australian Women's Weekly* began publication in 1933. Up until 1982, it was published weekly. It has a circulation of 1.7 million and an estimated readership of 2.5 million, including over half a million men, making it the most widely read magazine in Australia. These figures give the *Weekly*, as it is affectionately known, considerable power to influence readers and the wider community. It has never

been afraid to use its power in support of the rights and needs of Australian women. This attitude is evident on the cover of the first edition, which features an article on equal social rights. The *Weekly's* publisher, Bauer Media Group, is clear about its **agenda-setting** function in Australian life.

As the trusted voice of Australian women for over eight decades, The Australian Women's Weekly sets the agenda on what matters most to women. With a focus on quality long-form journalism, The Weekly delivers a unique combination of information and entertainment spanning real-life stories, food, fashion, beauty, health, celebrity, craft and of course royals.

www.bauer-media.com.au/brands/the-australian-women-s-weekly

To learn more about how the *Weekly* has developed since its inception, read the entry from the Australian Women's Archive Project linked on this page. You can search online copies of the *Weekly* from 1933 to 1983 at Trove.



Weblink



Figure 5.13 The *Australian Women's Weekly* has changed with the times, but some stories remain familiar.

Activity 5.4 The *Weekly*: Australian stories for more than 85 years

Select one week of the year (your birthday week is a good choice) and download the *Australian Women's Weekly* from that week for several decades, beginning in 1933.

Analyse the content and visual style of the magazine over these decades. Now do the same for a recent edition published in your birth month.

What is uniquely Australian about the *Weekly's* stories and style over time? What is constant and what has changed?

Choose one article and its accompanying images to analyse the technical and symbolic codes and conventions that suggest meaning.

Based on your research, can you make a prediction about what the magazine will be like in 10 years' time? Design and create a cover that matches your predictions.

Magazines today

There are Australian stories in print for every demographic. Most are targeted to a particular gender, their content and layout reflecting this. Traditional magazines, such as *Better Homes and Gardens*, *Woman's Day* and *Girlfriend*, together with a variety of special interest magazines on topics such as food, motoring, travel and gardening, service the mainstream market through pitching to their hobbies

and interests. Stories are built around these interests and constructed using familiar layout codes and conventions that vary according to the genre of the text. Audiences engage with and read these magazines with a sense of familiarity. The content changes with the seasons, but the story structure remains the same.



A new breed of print productions, termed ‘niche press’, also construct stories around hobbies and interests but service different demographics. Of these, Frankie Press is the best known.

These magazines are designed to attract young urban men and women who enjoy retro style, music, the arts, DIY, sustainability and are a bit quirky. *Frankie*, *Smith Journal* and their sister publication *Slow* are designed to engage their markets with a simulated handmade aesthetic that draws from the codes and conventions used by zine culture as well as **referencing** art and design magazines through the extensive use of white space. The stories in niche magazines reflect more independent aspects of Australian culture.



Activity 5.5 Niche market, niche structure

Select a magazine that has a small or specialist readership. Identify the target market, their interests and taste. Analyse the construction of stories within the magazine to see how the technical and symbolic codes and conventions are employed to structure stories to engage this market.

Annotate the cover and selected pages to demonstrate your learning.

Before talkback radio

Broadcast radio began in Australia in 1919 and, while music was the main feature of early radio, the media form established itself as a storyteller ideally suited to our very large but sparsely populated country. The popularity of long-running comedy and drama serials such as *Dad and Dave* (1937–53) and *Blue Hills* (1949–76) contributed to the development of Australian culture through radio. Download and listen to get a sense of what audiences enjoyed at that time.

Of course, most radio was commercial. Listen to some vintage ads at Australian Old Time Radio. Compare these early ads with those of today to see how advertising stories have become much more complex.

Radio was a family media form, so its stories were aimed at a broad audience sitting around the radio receiver in the lounge room. Transport yourself to a simpler time in the media by listening to some historical programming at the National Film and Sound Archive Soundcloud.

Children’s stories were well catered for with *Kindergarten of the Air*, school broadcasts and after-school programming based around story-based clubs such as The Argonauts.





Figure 5.14 When radio was the dominant media form

One feature of the development of Australian radio stories was the changing accent of presenters. At first most were required to use a British accent for all programs except comedy, especially on the ABC, but as time wore on Australian accents became acceptable. This change represented the shift in Australian attitudes to authority and contributed to the validation of Australian stories. As you listened to the excerpts above, you will have noticed this significant change in our culture.

Activity 5.6 That was then ... and still is today

Listen to some early Australian radio broadcasts. Make notes about features of the stories, themes and characters that were recognisably Australian right from the beginning. Which are still current today? What does this tell us about our culture? Create a brief audio presentation that illustrates your learning.

THE BOX

Television first broadcast in Australia in 1956, just in time for the Olympic Games in Melbourne. Tracing its history we can see, just as we did with radio, the developing confidence in Australian stories told in an authentically Australian way. Perhaps there is no better example than *Play School* (1966 to today).



Figure 5.15 *Play School* remains constant in the lives of children but changes with the times.

Play School is structured around one **story arc** per episode. Presenters develop the story as they play, sing, construct props and talk directly to the audience, inviting them to participate. Topics revolve around everyday children's activities and domestic life. Within each episode, a number of smaller stories in the form of video and storybook reading contribute facets to the main narrative arc, which is resolved by the end of each episode.

Old episodes of *Play School* reveal how Australian life and stories have developed over time. At first, *Play School* presenters used the simulated British accent required by the ABC at the time, and activities were strictly gendered. While the structure of the program has remained constant, its stories and the language and attitude of presenters have shifted in line with developments in Australian society and culture. In 2016 the ABC produced a documentary to mark *Play School*'s 60th birthday in which this developing sophistication is evident. *Big Ted's Excellent Adventure* is available on iView.

Activity 5.7 There's still a bear in there

A number of full episodes of *Play School* are available online, starting from 1966. Watch an early episode and a current one to analyse how *Play School* has changed as society has developed over the past 60 years.

Make notes about the codes and conventions used to construct *Play School* that have remained constant and those that have changed. How do they construct meaning for child and adult audiences? Note also any additions to the program in recent years.

What does this research reveal about the development of Australian society and its stories over the past 60 years?

There are many Australian television stories that have been part of the development of our culture. Each has contributed something to how we see ourselves today. Why not find out about those programs your grandparents loved? You are certain to learn about the evolution of the television stories that you and your parents enjoy.

Activity 5.8 Australian TV Hall of Fame

1 Research one of the following icons of Australian TV:

- *Skippy the Bush Kangaroo*
- *In Melbourne Tonight*
- *Pick a Box*
- *The Sullivans*
- *Number 96*
- *A Country Practice*
- *Hey Hey It's Saturday*
- *Neighbours*
- *Play School*
- *The Wiggles*.

2 Now create a list of your own iconic Australian television programs and share these with your class. What criteria did you use when selecting your list of Aussie greats?

ADVERTISING

Did you know that advertising on television is regulated to ensure that at least 80 per cent of the advertising screened between 6 a.m. and midnight on commercial free-to-air television is Australian-produced? This is to ensure that Australian television reflects Australian culture and to protect our media industry.

Some of the most compelling Australian stories come in the form of advertising. In order to sell a product or an idea, advertisers must make a connection. To be effective, advertising must align with the values and aspirations of its target market. As such, advertising is an excellent source of stories about who we are and who we want to be.



Weblink

By studying how advertisements for one product have been constructed over time, we can learn much about the development of our community. Cadbury has been advertising in Australia since the beginning of the 20th century. A number of print and television advertisements are available online and analysing them offers an understanding of how Australian culture and its advertising have developed. Australian Screen holds a collection from the 1950s and 1960s. The National Film and Sound Archive Vintage Cadbury Chocolate Ads is also worth looking at. For ads from a decade ago, search online for 'Wouldn't it be Nice?' Recent ads include 'What to Bring When You're Told Not to Bring a Thing' and 'Cadbury Coco 45'.

Activity 5.9 Wouldn't it be nice?

Choose a company or product that has been advertised in Australia for a long time. You could use Cadbury or choose something different. You could try ads for flavoured milk, paint, butter, lamb or Holden. Include the term 'Australia' in your search to ensure that the ads you find are local.

Select ads that are about a decade apart and deconstruct them to identify the symbolic and technical codes and conventions that communicate meaning in the media form in which they have been created.

How is each ad designed to engage its audience?

What is the storyline of each ad? How do the codes and conventions employed by the creator of the ad work together to structure meaning?

Is there a consistent story across the ads or are the stories specific to one decade?

From studying this series of advertisements, what can you say about Australian culture?

Modern advertising campaigns employ a wide range of representations in order to reflect the lives of audiences. This represents the complexity and diversity of Australian life.



Figure 5.16 Medibank ads featuring diverse Australian families

In 2016 Medibank released a new advertising campaign with the tag line 'I am better'. To create these ads, Medibank visited members' homes and filmed them for a day without scripting or prompting. The aim was to include diverse elements of modern society that have not traditionally been seen in marketing campaigns. Each ad is a story in itself, but when viewed together they represent the changing face of characters in Australian stories.

The campaign was screened during peak viewing periods and was received positively by most. It was, after all, carefully researched and designed to increase membership. However, there was criticism from some viewers who complained about the diversity represented in the ads on social media and to the Advertising Standards Bureau, which dismissed the complaints. You can read the case report on its website. This raises the question, what is an Australian story?



Weblink

Activity 5.10 We are better

Visit the Medibank YouTube channel or Twitter feed to find the 'I am better' campaign. Choose one or more advertisements to analyse.

How are the advertisements constructed? What codes and conventions are used to suggest meaning? How do the ads encourage the audience to engage with the message?

What factors might influence different readings of these advertisements? How did the Advertising Standards Bureau and users on social media react to complaints? What do you think about the representation of families in the ads?

MAJOR MEDIA PLAYERS IN AUSTRALIA

The Australian media industry is a combination of commercial, government and community organisations. This mix influences the type of media products to which we have access. Most commercial media outlets are owned and controlled by a few very large companies. Some of these companies are Australian, some are global; all have commercial links to media organisations around the world.

It is important to understand who owns and controls the media you consume. The media are powerful organisations; they impact on our daily life and have the capacity to affect every person and organisation in Australia – individuals, groups and governments. The media influence the way you live and work, from structuring the ways we think about our culture to encouraging you to buy a chicken sub, convincing your parents that a film is unsuitable for your younger siblings, or pushing the federal government to enact legislation to control any aspect of our society.

All media consumers – whether individuals, organisations or governments – are ambivalent about their relationship with the media, enjoying the stories they weave but unsure about how much power they really wield over our lives and culture. Individuals like to believe that they are independent of media influence. Community groups may try to control the media. Governments are circumspect; they know that large media organisations can and do influence the way the public vote. Whatever your relationship with the media, matters of ownership and control need some serious thought.

Stories do not just appear out of nowhere; they grow from and are made within a culture. Media stories are influenced by cultural circulation; that is, they are created by industry professionals, independent creative teams and individuals who live in a culture alongside their audiences and critics. Media creators may possess a passion, a need or a job that involves storytelling, but producing media is not always easy.

Media organisations and practitioners work under a range of constraints, the first of which are money and time. Stories cost money to make, and to reach an audience, it takes time to make them.

There is not a media storyteller in existence who has the budget they 'need' to make their story. *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015) director George Miller struggled with his \$150 million budget and the 18 years it took from pre-production to release. The film was a long time in what industry insiders call 'development hell', an extended developmental period before production.

Stories often change as they go through the production process. Redesigns can be brought on because of differences or rethinking in the vision of the creators of a project, for financial reasons or because of technological change. Sometimes it can be all three.

Like media professionals, independent producers and Media students also struggle with making stories. You will certainly have financial constraints, we never seem to have the equipment we want, but more importantly you will be constrained by time. It is the nature of the business.

OUR LAWS REFLECT THE NEED FOR AUSTRALIAN STORIES

The media is a powerful entity in society and, in recognition of this, the Australian Constitution empowers the Commonwealth Government to make laws regarding its ownership and control.

Anyone who owns a licence to broadcast TV or radio must comply with the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* (amended in 2006), which contains 19 far-reaching aims, as set out below. These aims demonstrate the government's goals in developing and protecting Australia's media and culture.

The *Broadcasting Services Act 1992*, section 3(1)

- (a) to promote the availability to audiences throughout Australia of a diverse range of radio and television services offering entertainment, education and information; and
- (aa) to promote the availability to audiences and users throughout Australia of a diverse range of datacasting services; and
- (b) to provide a regulatory environment that will facilitate the development of a broadcasting industry in Australia that is efficient, competitive and responsive to audience needs; and
- (ba) to provide a regulatory environment that will facilitate the development of a datacasting industry in Australia that is efficient, competitive and responsive to audience and user needs; and
- (c) to encourage diversity in control of the more influential broadcasting services; and
- (e) to promote the role of broadcasting services in developing and reflecting a sense of Australian identity, character and cultural diversity; and
- (ea) to promote the availability to audiences throughout Australia of television and radio programs about matters of local significance; and
- (f) to promote the provision of high quality and innovative programming by providers of broadcasting services; and
- (fa) to promote the provision of high quality and innovative content by providers of datacasting services; and
- (g) to encourage providers of commercial and community broadcasting services to be responsive to the need for a fair and accurate coverage of matters of public interest and for an appropriate coverage of matters of local significance; and
- (h) to encourage providers of broadcasting services to respect community standards in the provision of program material; and
- (ha) to ensure designated content/hosting service providers respect community standards in relation to content; and
- (i) to encourage the provision of means for addressing complaints about broadcasting services; and
- (j) to ensure that providers of broadcasting services place a high priority on the protection of children from exposure to program material which may be harmful to them; and
- (ja) to ensure that international broadcasting services are not provided contrary to Australia's national interest; and
- (k) to provide a means for addressing complaints about certain internet content; and
- (l) to restrict access to certain internet content that is likely to cause offence to a reasonable adult; and
- (m) to protect children from exposure to internet content that is unsuitable for children; and
- (n) to ensure the maintenance and, where possible, the development of diversity, including public, community and indigenous broadcasting, in the Australian broadcasting system in the transition to digital broadcasting.

Sourced from the Federal Register of Legislation at 23 August 2017. For the latest information on Australian Government law please go to <https://www.legislation.gov.au>. CC BY 4.0 licence

Activity 5.11 What do these ambitious aims really mean for our media?

What do the aims of the Broadcasting Services Act mean in terms of developing and protecting Australian stories on radio, television and the internet?

What does this legislation say about protecting audiences? Why do you think it takes this approach?

Why would Australia need legislation to protect Australian media?

Allocate each of the 19 aims of the Broadcasting Services Act to one or two class members, to research and report back to the class.

Create a class wiki or Google document that brings everyone's research together.

TELEVISION, OUR FAVOURITE STORYTELLER

In terms of media forms, television is the most prolific storyteller of all. With hundreds of free-to-air and subscription stations and at least one screen in over 99 per cent of Australian homes, television is a powerful and pervasive storytelling medium.

Across all demographics, Australians watch 90 hours of television each month. As a group, teenagers watch the least television, around 35.5 hours a month, which is still nearly nine hours a week. Although your age group may not sit down to watch it, you are still exposed to television through your incidental consumption of televisions in your household, simply by being in the room or hearing the television from another room.

As Table 5.1 demonstrates, Australians watch a lot of television, which makes it the major source of stories in our lives. Study the table and compare the results for each demographic with your family's viewing habits. Is the television on all day or is it mainly in the evening? What do you and your family watch? How do you watch? How does your family decide what to watch? Do you watch in a group or mainly alone? What else are people doing as they watch? Does your family concentrate on some programs and not on others? Do you talk about what you are watching? What do you do during the ads?

Thinking about the answers to these questions will help you understand the importance of televisual stories in the lives of Australians.

Table 5.1 Australian viewing data

A MONTH IN THE LIFE – Q3 2016	KIDS	TEENS	P18–24	P25–34	P35–49	P50–64	P65+	TOTAL PEOPLE
Watching broadcast TV in the home per person across the population (Consolidated to 28 days in Q3 2016)	60:46	35:37	37:02	57:29	91:01	131:53	158:43	90:16
Q3 2015 (Consolidated to 7 days)	64:58	38:22	39:24	61:31	93:12	126:51	155:33	90:42
Watching Live TV Q3 2015	54:42	31:49	32:52	50:59	80:54	119:48	144:40	81:21
	60:02	34:59	35:10	55:35	84:11	116:18	143:57	82:57
Watching Playback to 7 TV (when watched) (what watched) Q3 2015	4:29	3:04	3:26	5:12	8:24	10:08	12:04	7:22
	4:56	3:23	4:14	5:56	9:01	10:33	11:36	7:45
Watching Playback 8–28 TV (when watched)	1:33	0:43	0:44	1:16	1:43	1:56	1:58	1:33
Online time spent per active user	3:21	4:05	68:33	81:04	83:03	81:47	34:08	62:28
Watching video on internet per viewer	14:23	6:35	20:03	19:16	11:24	10:32	5:50	12:46
Watching online video on a smartphone per active online user Q4 2015	n.a.	n.a.	14:11	6:53	3:01	0:52	n.a.	4:18
Watching online video on a tablet per active online user Q4 2015	n.a.	n.a.	5:35	6:32	3:26	0:43	0:52	3:01

Source: Australian Multi-screen Report, Quarter 3 2016, Nielsen

Q3 2016 playback figures are to seven days and 8–28 days || Q3 2015 playback figures are to seven days.

Q3 2016 Other TV screen use excludes 8–28 day playback || Q3 2015 Other TV screen use includes 8–28 day playback.



Weblink

Australians like to watch Australian programs

OzTAM is the company that collects television audience measurements (TAM) in Australia. This ratings data is used by television stations, advertisers and OzTAM subscribers to plan and create programming that will suit the needs of Australian audiences. OzTAM samples minute-by-minute viewing of free-to-air television (including time shifting) across all devices in 5250 homes and 2120 homes for subscription television every week of the year. This is the largest per capita sampling system in the world and the data collected is extremely detailed. If you have been part of OzTAM ratings, tell your teacher and the class what it involved.

OzTAM data demonstrates that Australians prefer to watch Australian programs. Summaries of the data are published weekly on its website. Report E is a list of the top 20 programs each week. It consistently reveals that we like to watch sport, news, reality TV and Australian drama. Search this data to determine what Australians watch. It will tell you much about Australian culture.

Activity 5.12 Top 20

Working in small groups, select four weeks of OzTAM data and look at Report E. Each group should cover a different four weeks because big events such as sport or reality TV finales have an impact on the data overall.

Categorise the top 20 programs in each four-week period by genre and country of origin.

Examine the number of people viewing each program. What is the highest rating program? How many viewers does it have? What is the average viewing audience over the week? Which is the highest rating station and which is the lowest?

Collate the results for each group.

What does your analysis reveal about the taste of Australian audiences?

AUSTRALIAN CONTENT ON TELEVISION

Australian TV networks are highly competitive businesses. Government legislation enforces minimum Australian content requirements. The Broadcasting Services Act details a specific set of standards to protect Australian television content. The number of hours of Australian content that must be broadcast for each type of program is detailed in the Australian Content Standard (2016). These rules apply to all television broadcast in Australia.

The Standard requires all commercial free-to-air TV licensees to broadcast an annual minimum transmission quota of 55 per cent Australian programming between 6 a.m. and midnight on their primary channel. They are also required to provide at least 1460 hours of Australian programming on their non-primary channels. In addition, there are specific minimum annual sub-quotas for Australian drama, documentaries and children's programs, as well as minimum content rules for advertising and pay TV.

The legislation is designed to protect both the industry and Australian audiences, because we prefer to watch Australian stories. Television programming is expensive to produce. Without minimum content rules, stations would be tempted to buy cheap programs from overseas rather than producing or commissioning Australian content.

What is an Australian program?

For commercial TV broadcasters, the Australian Content Standard defines local content using a 'creative control' test, rather than a 'look and feel' test. The criteria relate to the nationality of key personnel and to the location of the program's production and post-production. The location of filming, source of subject matter, sources of finance and nationality of the production company are not relevant criteria. Thus a program set in Australia but made in another country by overseas personnel is not Australian, but a program set in another country but made in Australia by Australians is. Confusing? Not really. Many countries have similar content rules. The actual regulations are shown on the next page.

Broadcasting Services (Australian Content) Standard 2016

This standard requires minimum amounts of first release Australian drama programs, documentary programs and children's programs (including children's drama, but excluding preschool programs) to be broadcast by commercial television broadcasting licensees; and requires preschool programs broadcast by commercial television broadcasting licensees to be Australian programs.

In order to be consistent with Australia's international co-production obligations, this standard recognises Australian official co-productions equally with Australian programs for the purposes of compliance with this standard.

Object of standard

The object of this standard is to promote the role of commercial television broadcasting services in developing and reflecting a sense of Australian identity, character and cultural diversity by supporting the community's continued access to television programs produced under Australian creative control.

What is an Australian program

Subject to subsections (3) and (4), a program is an Australian program if:

- (a) it is produced under the creative control of Australians; and
 - (b) it was made without financial assistance from the television production fund.
- (2) For paragraph (1)(a), a program is produced under the creative control of Australians if:
- (a) the producer of the program is, or the producer of the program are, Australian (whether or not the program is produced in conjunction with a co-producer, or an executive producer, who is not an Australian); and
 - (b) either:
 - (i) the director of the program is, or the directors of the program are, Australian; or

- (ii) the writer of the program is, or the writers of the program are, Australian; and
 - (c) at least 50% of the leading actors, including voice actors, or on-screen presenters appearing in the program are Australians; and
 - (d) in the case of a drama program – at least 75% of the major supporting cast appearing in the program are Australians; and
 - (e) the program is produced and post-produced in Australia (whether or not it is filmed in Australia); and
 - (f) in the case of an animated program – the program satisfies at least 3 of the following requirements:
 - (i) the production designer is Australian;
 - (ii) the character designer is Australian;
 - (iii) the supervising layout artist is Australian;
 - (iv) the supervising storyboard artist is Australian;
 - (v) the key background artist is Australian.
- (3) If a program includes segments that, if they were individual programs, would not comply with subsection (2), only a segment that, if it were an individual program, would comply with subsection (2) is taken to be an Australian program.

Example: A sketch comedy program including Australian skits and a documentary program including Australian segments.

- (4) A documentary program that complies with subsection (2) is not an Australian program if it is a reversioning of one or more existing documentary programs that are not Australian programs, Australian official co-productions, New Zealand programs or Australian/New Zealand Programs.

Broadcasting Services (Australian Content) Standard 2016 made under subsection 122(1) of the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992*
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Activity 5.13 Australian content law in plain language

Read the excerpt above and write a summary of its content in plain language.

Why do you think this legislation is so complex?

Look at the entire document online. Skim through to find a point that interests you and create a poster that illustrates your learning.



Fiction and non-fiction: it is still an Australian story

When we think of the word 'story', we tend to think of drama and comedy, but stories are evident in all genres. News broadcasts comprise a series of stories, mostly about bad things that have happened in society. Sport is constructed as a story where hard work, mateship and talent triumph over loss. Reality TV combines drama with competition in the construction of narratives about overcoming hardship to win the prize. Advertisements tell us stories about problems that can be solved through purchasing products. Wherever we look, the media is full of stories, many of them reflecting our lives and culture.

Activity 5.14 Variety in Australian programming

Use a TV guide to help you with this task.

Choose one day of TV programming (ensure that all days of the week are covered by the class) and highlight all the Australian content. For texts that have both Australian and overseas content, estimate how many minutes of each program are made in Australia.

Calculate the proportion of TV programming that is Australian for the day you are analysing.

Determine the genres of programs made here for Australian audiences.

Combine your research with that conducted by your classmates.

Write a report about the variety of Australian programming on television.

Is reality TV the ultimate Australian story?

There is no doubt that Australians love reality TV in all its forms. Week after week, reality programming features prominently in television ratings. Cheaper to produce than scripted drama and comedy, reality media fulfils Australian content requirements and ticks all the boxes of audience engagement, but why?

Reality media is often screened during family viewing time and often watched by several family members together. Each audience member brings different needs and expectations to their viewing. Some watch to develop skills, as is the case for cooking and home construction programs. Others want to learn about relationships, as Professor Catharine Lumby's research into teenage girls and reality media revealed. Some enjoy the competitive aspects of reality media, which is often structured using the codes and conventions of sporting contests. Many viewers enjoy reality television as a form of soapie and become invested in the lives of participants.



Figure 5.17 Competition and mateship are features of *MasterChef*'s storylines.

Much reality programming is based on an international format that has been, more or less, adapted for Australian conditions. Those programs that have been heavily modified rate better than those that are simply copied and cast with Australian contestants. This was the case for the first series of *MasterChef* in 2009, which for the first few weeks stayed true to the UK version where contestants were placed in conflict with each other and forced to vote each other off. The ratings dropped dramatically and the format was tweaked to suit Australian culture and values where mates work together and support each other.

Audiences love to see stories based on their lives and values played out on television. Look

back at the values listed on pages 119–20 and think about the stories that we see in reality programs. Competition and hard work are the backbone of most narratives. The reason for the hard work? To achieve competitors' dreams, better their lives and those of their families. They are searching for self-improvement, whether winning a race, losing weight, cooking a sublime dish or building a perfect room. And they do this with humour and by helping other competitors in need. These Australian stories represent Australian values.

Reality media is built on stories of good guys and bad guys. Audiences are positioned to cheer on the good guy, who is usually constructed as a battling underdog, and to hate the villains while knowing that they will never win.

The structure of reality media is usually that of a narrative based on the classic hero's journey, which you can read about on page 254. Participants are constructed as characters who leave their ordinary lives to experience a series of increasingly difficult cause-and-effect trials that test their endurance and emotional strength. They express doubt in their ability to camera or in a voice-over while sad music accompanies their confessions. Eventually the music swells to signal the winners emerging triumphant. Being Australia, everyone is a winner, even those who are eliminated along the way, because they leave knowing that they now have the power to overcome challenges and have made new mates for life.

Reality television often requires contestants to live together as a family. As in all Australian television families, there are mum and dad characters, naughty boys and girly girls, conflict, tears and relationship difficulties, which are inevitably resolved around the dinner table. Selective editing of hours of footage means that concise stories can be constructed that audiences willingly read as 'real'.

Activity 5.15 It's just a game

Choose two popular reality television programs to analyse and compare. Begin with the opening title sequences. How do the establishment of characters, location and storyline, selection of shots, use of colour, editing, sound including voice-over and music, titles and special effects construct the themes of each program? What are the similarities and differences between the title sequences? Share your analyses with your classmates and create a class list of codes and conventions for great reality programs.

Choose your favourite program and deconstruct it as a hero's journey. How is the hero constructed? What about the villain? What roles do supporting characters play? If there are judges, examine their role in directing the characters. Are they positioned as gods or as mentors?

Create a poster that illustrates the features of one program you have studied as an Australian story.

PROTECTING AUSTRALIAN INDUSTRY

Protecting Australia's film and TV industry is often considered synonymous with protecting Australia's culture. We enjoy overseas programs, but we want to see ourselves in our media too. We like to watch films and TV programs that are recognisably Australian, that accurately represent our culture. Remember the criticism levelled at *The Simpsons* episode 'Bart vs Australia'? Most of the bad press centred around its flawed and unrealistic portrayal of Australians and Australian culture.

In recognition of this cultural need, domestic film and TV production receives special assistance from State and federal governments in the form of financial support, business incentives and the legislation of local content rules. It is believed that a functioning media industry ensures that Australian stories continue to be created, provides financial benefits for the country and provides valuable employment opportunities for Australian media specialists, especially those whose employment is only marginally viable because of the relatively small size of our industry.

Activity 5.16 Investigating Australian content and culture

- 1 Check the weekly prime-time viewing schedule in your local TV guide and prepare a table classifying Australian programs by genre and storyline.
- 2 Do the same exercise for films currently screening at the cinema.
- 3 Convert this information into a pie chart and write a short report on your findings.
 - In your report, consider the breakdown of programs by genre and storylines.
 - What do your findings tell you about the types of Australian stories available to audiences?
 - What do your results suggest about Australian culture?

STORYTELLING FOR AUSTRALIAN AUDIENCES

As you have discovered, most Australian media is made primarily for Australian audiences (although much is also sold overseas). To maximise distribution opportunities in Australia, producers often aim for a broad audience. What does this mean?

Who is the average Australian?

What do you think of when you hear the term ‘average Australian’? Are you and your family average?

According to the 2016 Census, the typical Australian is a 38-year-old woman, born in Australia of Australian parents. Her ancestors were Australian or British. She speaks English at home and is Christian.

Ms Average is married, and lives with her husband and two children (a boy and a girl) in a stand-alone house with three bedrooms and two cars in a suburb of one of Australia’s capital cities. They have a mortgage.

The average Australian has completed Year 12, and drives to work as a sales assistant. She works 32 hours a week and also does between five and 14 hours of unpaid domestic work. Typical males are 37 and do less than five hours of domestic work per week.

For media producers, the term ‘average Australian’ is not very useful. No-one is going to create a story about Ms Average. She is just too ... average. The media thrives on conflict, drama and difference, none of which is to be found in the idea of average.

However, a closer look at Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows that, despite the average Australian, we are a diverse country – which is lucky for our media. Diversity makes for good stories.

The average Australian appears in the media in advertisements, news items about accidents or unprovoked attacks and as background characters in film and television texts. We tend to think of her as a bit player in her own life or as a consumer of media. She never stars in it. So who does?



Weblink



Figure 5.18 *The Family Law*

DIVERSITY IN AUSTRALIAN TV DRAMA AND COMEDY

Australia has one of the most culturally diverse populations in the world, with at least 32 per cent from non-Anglo-Celtic backgrounds. Further, more than one in 10 Australians now identify with diverse sexual orientation or gender identity; and just under one in five people report having a disability.

Commentators are questioning why our TV dramas are not reflecting the diversity that is now such a ubiquitous feature of our workplaces, schools, communities and neighbourhoods, and, for many of us, our own family backgrounds.

Is the TV production industry merely responding to consumer demand and audience expectations? Screen Australia’s 2013 Hearts & Minds study revealed a perception amongst audiences that mainstream Australian content failed to reflect the multicultural reality of urban life.

Screen Australia, *Seeing Ourselves: Reflections on diversity in Australian TV drama*, 2016

Activity 5.17 Diversity in Australian characters

Choose two popular Australian drama or comedy TV stories, one that represents diversity and one that does not.

Analyse how the technical and symbolic codes and conventions in these texts construct representations of Australian characters.

Create an illustrated poster or audiovisual analysis that demonstrates the similarities and differences in representations of Australian characters in media texts.

DOCUMENTARIES

Australia has a long history of documentary filmmaking dating back to 1901. Film and television documentaries are ideally suited to this area of study, as their very purpose is to tell a story. In Chapter 3, you learnt about the different forms of documentary. If you are going to study documentaries, it is a good idea to revise this section.

The codes and conventions used to construct documentaries vary according to their form, purpose and audience. Most fall into the category of edutainment, some are purely entertaining while others seek to teach. Search out some from the following list, which demonstrates how varied documentary narrative stories can be:

- *After the Apology* (2017) – Aboriginal children are still being removed from their families
- *Chasing Asylum* (2016) – illegally obtained footage shows life in detention
- *Embrace* (2016) – women's fight with their body image
- *Gayby Baby* (2015) – growing up with gay parents
- *Prison Songs* (2015) – musical documentary set in Darwin's jail
- *That Sugar Film* (2014) – What happens when you take up sugar?
- *Bra Boys: Blood is thicker than water* (2011) – life in a surf culture gang
- *Seven Years On* series (1976–2010) – Gillian Armstrong on growing up female in Australia
- *Not Quite Hollywood* (2008) – Ozploitation films were a thing
- *Cane Toads: An unnatural history* (1988) – hilarious coverage of an imported pest
- *Ningla A-Na* (1972) – the origins of the Aboriginal tent embassy
- *Morning of the Earth* (1972) – a musical surfing odyssey
- *Kokoda Front Line!* (1942) – full-length newsreel, first Australian film to win an Oscar
- *South* (1919) – silent footage of Ernest Shackleton's doomed trip to Antarctica.



Figure 5.19 *That Sugar Film* was popular edutainment.

Australian Story

Australian Story is a 30-minute documentary series that has screened on the ABC since 1996. *Australian Story* tells the stories of Australians who have overcome challenges. Sometimes these stories are about heroes; more often they are about ordinary Australians who have triumphed in the face of adversity.

Australian Story is always structured in three acts; the plot is established, then conflict and drama are introduced and developed, and finally the program ends with a resolution. On screen it appears simple, but it is tightly constructed and edited. Interviews form the backbone of every episode. There is no narrator and no padding. Journalists try to be invisible so that subjects tell their own story. Interviews are cut together to construct a narrative, while imagery develops the context of each story to engage the audience.

The aim of each episode is to take the audience to a story behind the news in an intimate way. The program often uses home video to document the journey of its subjects. *Australian Story* is considered a tribute program by many. This is because it does not cover stories in which the bad people win because ABC research shows that its audience does not like those types of stories on this program.

Activity 5.18 Deconstructing *Australian Story*

Choose an episode of *Australian Story* from iView and analyse how the story is constructed.

Analyse how the three-act structure works, as described on page 238, and fit the story into this structure.

Make notes about how the technical and symbolic codes and conventions of narrative have been used to construct the narrative. *Australian Story* is often constructed to elicit an emotional response in its audience. How do the codes and conventions achieve this?

Look at how the story arc is used to establish, develop and resolve the narrative.

How does the use of audio construct character and story?

INDIGENOUS STORIES

Australian stories containing representations of Indigenous Australian peoples are a rich source of learning about how technical and symbolic codes and conventions communicate meaning and can change over time. The Australian media has covered stories about Indigenous Australian peoples since the first newspapers, photographs, and of course the earliest films. However, the first Australian Indigenous character, a 'black tracker' named Warrigal in the 1907 film *Robbery Under Arms*, was played by a white actor in blackface. This casting speaks volumes about the journey that Indigenous Australian media stories have travelled. Stories created by and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples came many years later.

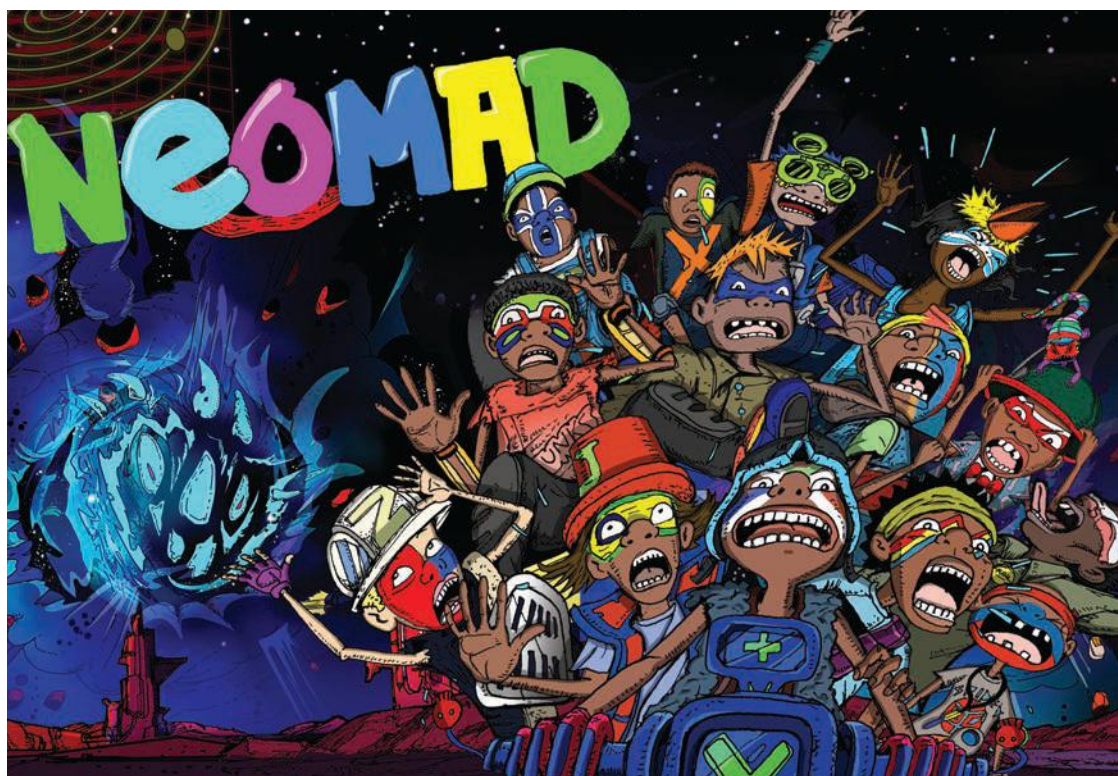


Figure 5.20 *Neomad*, winner of the 2016 Gold Ledger Award – acknowledging excellence in Australian comic art and publishing

There are many approaches to analysing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' stories. You could study texts about Indigenous Australians or you could choose stories by Indigenous Australians. These texts could be created in any media form for a broad or a specialist audience. You could analyse texts from across time that demonstrate how far Australian society has come, or how far we have to go.

After more than a century of Australian cinema, we've seen the arrival of the first great Indigenous Australian films: the breathtaking Samson and Delilah (2009) followed by Charlie's Country (2014) and Ten Canoes (2006).

Luke Buckmaster, *The Guardian*, 20 October 2015

One approach is to study stories that have been created in a range of media forms by a single practitioner, such as artist Tracey Moffatt, who works in video and photography, or actress Deborah Mailman, who works in film and television. You could study works created across time by a director, such as Rolf de Heer, or an actor, such as David Gulpilil. Significant texts, such as *Jedda* (1955) and *Boney* (1971–72), demonstrate how the social expectations of the times in which they were produced contrast with recent stories, such as comic book series *Neomad* and superhero television drama and political commentary *Cleverman* (2016–17). *Family Rules* (2016) is a reality program about the life of Perth Noongar widow Daniella Borg and her nine daughters, while *Black Comedy* (2014–) can be read very differently by a range of audiences.



Figure 5.21 *Cleverman*

Activity 5.19 Contemporary Indigenous Australian filmmakers and filmmakers who work with Indigenous stories

Search the list of filmmakers below and choose one film made by an Indigenous Australian filmmaker and one by a filmmaker who works with Indigenous Australian peoples.

Analyse the structure of each film, paying special attention to the technical and symbolic codes and conventions with which plot, themes, values, characters and location are constructed.

Write a report that illustrates the similarities and differences in each film.

Choose from:

- Ivan Sen
- Rolf de Heer
- Tracey Moffatt
- Warwick Thornton
- Brendan Fletcher
- Richard Frankland
- Rachel Perkins
- Paul Goldman
- Larissa Behrendt
- Stephen Johnson
- Wayne Blair
- Stephen Page
- John Pilger.

PRACTICAL TIP

Download handy tips for writing about Indigenous Australian peoples' stories from the City of Ipswich.



AAP Image/Mary Evans Picture Library

Figure 5.22 *Samson and Delilah* (2009)

AUSTRALIAN FILM STORIES

After a strong start at the beginning of the 20th century, the Australian film industry gradually fell into decline until government funding helped develop what is known as the Australian New Wave in the 1970s and 1980s. Federal government investment in Australian film led to over 400 feature films being released between 1970 and 1985, more than the entire number of films that had been released before that time.

Australian New Wave cinema was all about Australian stories. Subject matter, settings, themes, characters and style reflected a change in attitude from financiers, filmmakers and audiences to the value of home-grown cinema – Australian stories told by Australian filmmakers. Films featured wide-open spaces or suburban grittiness, dark, laconic humour and the stories of everyday people. *Mad Max* director George Miller was one director whose career began during this time and is still strong today.



Alamy Stock Photo/Photo 12

Figure 5.23 *Storm Boy* (1976)

While we cannot say that there is a typical film from the New Wave, *Storm Boy* (1976), directed by Henri Safran, represents a common depiction of life outside the city. Recently restored, it is well worth seeking out. You can see before-and-after shots of its restoration online at the National Film and Sound Archive. A remake is under production, bringing the story into a contemporary setting. The documentary *Not Quite Hollywood* (2008), directed by Mark Hartley, explores one aspect of this period of Australian cinema: the low-budget Ozploitation film. It is also worth seeking out.



Alamy Stock Photo/Pictorial Press Ltd

Figure 5.24 *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (1994)

The New Wave was followed in the 1990s by what some have termed Australia's 'glitter period' of filmmaking, when directors including Baz Luhrmann rose to prominence with films including the first in what is termed his Red Curtain Trilogy, *Strictly Ballroom* (1992). Around the same time, Stephen Elliott's *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (1994) won the Academy Award for costume design. The decade saw a decline in government funding for film, which meant that filmmakers were forced into creating films that were likely to enjoy greater commercial success than of the previous two decades. This meant that some important but not commercially viable stories would never be made.

In the 1990s, period and outback films gave way to a focus on urban stories, the diversity of Australian life and an exploration of quirkiness, eccentricity and individuality. Stories of mateship continued but were joined by a series of women-centred narratives, often made by women directors, including Jocelyn Moorhouse, Tracey Moffatt, Jane Campion and Gillian Armstrong.

The 21st century has seen Australian stories represent diverse themes, stories and characters. Films are usually the product of a combination of government and private funding, some of which comes from overseas. Our cultural history remains prominent in films such as *The Dish* (2000), *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (2002), *Red Dog* (2011) and *The Proposition* (2005), while films centred on crime, including *The Jammed* (2007), *Noise* (2007), *Animal Kingdom* (2010) and Ivan Sen's *Mystery Road* (2013) and *Goldstone* (2016), continue the stylistic heritage of the Ned Kelly saga.

Film stories that reflect our fears and values while exploring what it is to live in contemporary Australia, such as *Wish You Were Here* (2012), *Satellite Boy* (2012), *Charlie's Country* (2013), Adam Elliot's Academy Award-winning animation *Harvey Krumpet* (2003), *The Babadook* (2014), *Paper Planes* (2015), *Pawno* (2016) and *Ali's Wedding* (2017), suit a range of audiences but rarely large or long-running ones.



Alamy Stock Photo/Entertainment Pictures

Figure 5.25 *The Babadook* (2014)

Australia has a notable number of **auteurs**, directors whose films demonstrate a personal style. Rolf de Heer, Jane Campion, Paul Cox, Gillian Armstrong, George Miller, Ivan Sen, Baz Luhrmann, Rob Sitch and animator Adam Elliot all come to mind. Studying their personal style will reveal much about what they think Australian stories are all about.



Alamy Stock Photo/AF archive

Figure 5.26 *Ten Canoes* (2006)

Endemol Shine



CAN THERE EVEN BE AN AUSTRALIAN MEDIA STORY TODAY?

In an international media market, what does it mean to be an Australian story? Can an Australian version of an international format such as *The Voice*, *Survivor* or *MasterChef* be Australian?

Activity 5.20 21st-century Australian media stories

In small groups, create a pitch for an Australian film or television series that reflects our values but is not clichéd. Can you do it?

Pitch your idea to the class.

Figure 5.27 *Wake in Fright* remake (2017)

NEW FROM OLD: THE REMAKE

A number of iconic Australian films from the New Wave period are being remade, either for television or in film. These include *Storm Boy* (1976), *Wake in Fright* (1971), *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975) and *Skippy the Bush Kangaroo* (1966–70). The question is, why remake classics when new films could be made? The answer lies somewhere between nostalgia for the past, the belief that because these stories have stood the test of time they will engage audiences once more, and the imperatives of the industry, which is risk-averse. Hollywood has demonstrated the financial success of remakes, and filmmaking is very expensive. It is easy to see why producers feel that they might have a greater chance of return on their investment with a well-known story.

Producers of the *Storm Boy* remake claim that they will retain the authenticity of the original text but bring it into a contemporary setting. Like the Ned Kelly remakes covered earlier in this chapter, analysing both versions is a very good way to determine the essential features of Australian stories then and now.

Activity 5.21 Will remakes make it?

Choose one of the texts mentioned above to watch. As you do so, create a list of aspects of the film that would work with today's audience and those that will need a reboot in order to ensure financial or critical success. How would you change the film to bring it up to date?

Write a business case outlining your analysis.

REFLECTING ON AUSTRALIAN STORIES

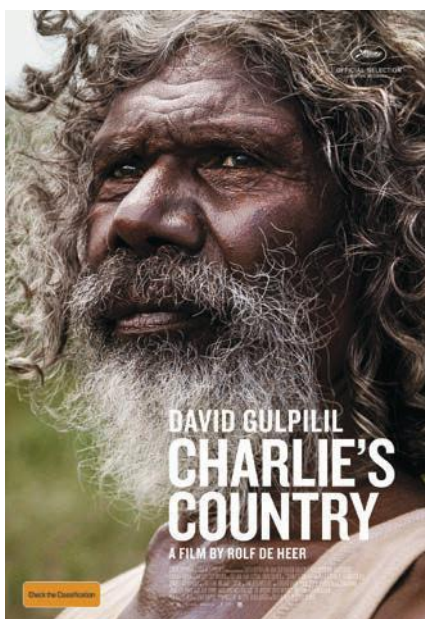
This area of study has taken you on a long journey of discovery. It is time to think about what you have learnt about how and why Australian stories are constructed as they are and what it means to be the audience of these stories.

Activity 5.22 Australian stories are more than cliché

Write a list of your learnings from this area of study. Organise this list into categories based on the key knowledge and skills of this outcome.

Create an infographic or poster that demonstrates what you have learnt about Australian stories in the media.

Alamy Stock Photo/Photo 12



Alamy Stock Photo/PARAMOUNT PICTURES / Ronald Grant Archive



Getty Images/John D. Kisch/ Separate Cinema Archive



OUTCOME 1

On completion of this unit the student should be able to analyse the intentions of media creators and producers and the influences of narratives on the audience in different media forms.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 1.

KEY KNOWLEDGE

- the development and communication of a distinctive style by media creators and producers in the construction of narratives in different media forms
- the manipulation of media codes and conventions by media creators and producers in the construction of narratives in different media forms
- the influences of historical and cultural context on the construction of narratives in different media forms
- the influences of institutional, economic, social and/or political factors and constraints on the work of media professionals
- notions of audience and engagement and how these influence the construction, production, distribution, consumption and reception of narratives
- the influence of narratives on audience engagement, consumption and reception in different media forms
- media language.

KEY SKILLS

- analyse the distinctive style of media creators and producers in different media forms
- analyse the structure of narratives in different media forms
- analyse the influences of historical and cultural context on the construction of narratives in different media forms
- analyse the influences of institutional, economic, social and/or political factors and constraints on the work of media creators and producers in different media forms
- analyse and reflect on the way personal values relate to individual interest and engagement in narratives in different media forms
- analyse the influence of narratives on audience engagement, consumption and reception in different media forms
- use media language.

Students select and study at least two narratives in two different media forms to gain an understanding of the construction of narrative.

Area of Study Outcomes, Key Knowledge and Key Skills points are reproduced by permission from the VCE Media Study Design (2018–2022), © VCAA.

This area of study is all about exploring narratives that have been created and distributed in different media forms. The analysis will develop a deeper understanding of the knowledge and skills you learnt in Chapter 5. Guided by your teacher, you will select your own stories for investigation. This chapter mainly focuses on Australian producers, but the narratives you study may be drawn from any media form and produced anywhere in the world. If you choose to study narratives created in another country, use the information in this chapter as a model for analysing texts. For the purposes of this area of study, media forms include the following:

- moving image, such as film, television, video, animation
- still image, such as photography
- audio, such as radio, podcast
- print, such as magazine, zine, comic, graphic novel, newspaper, poster
- digital/online, such as online video and audio, streaming video and audio, podcast, magazine, comic, graphic novel, newspaper, video game, blog, website, app
- convergent or hybridised media.

There are many ways to present your analysis, including in written or oral form, as an audiovisual production such as a documentary, a print production such as a poster or infographic, or a multimedia presentation, such as an annotated visual essay. Ask your teacher about the form of presentation that allows you to demonstrate the key knowledge and skills outlined above at the highest level.

One approach to this area of study is to further develop your knowledge of Australian stories through your investigation. You may select narratives that were referred to in Chapter 5, but you cannot analyse texts that you have already studied.

Stories are everything for humans – if we can fit something into a story we will do. We understand things better if they fit to stories, we remember things better if they fit to stories.

Professor Sophie Scott, neuroscientist

MEDIA PROFESSIONALS DEVELOP THEIR OWN STYLE

Creators across all media forms develop and express their own personal style, a recognisable directorial, creative and aesthetic sense that is constructed through their use of equipment and processes and informed by the historical and cultural contexts in which they work. This results in media productions that are clearly recognisable as the work of an individual.

A few lucky media producers create works that are financially viable, which puts them in a position to develop their distinctive style through the production of works that engage commercial audiences. Australian directors Baz Luhrmann, Rolf de Heer and Warwick Thornton's works strongly reflect the development of personal styles which have been honed over the course of their careers. Like all media practitioners, their works are created within the contexts of the inevitable institutional, economic and social constraints that are part of the construction of media texts.

Most media practitioners, however, work on productions directed by others. Their personal style may be well known in the industry yet at the same time largely invisible to the wider public until they win awards. How many students in your class know of Anna Borghesi? You may not know her name, but if you know *Red Dog: True Blue* (2016), *Hotel Mumbai* (2017) or even iconic Australian film *Romper Stomper* (1992), you will know her work as one of Australia's leading production and costume designers.

A few media professionals become household names because of their instantly recognisable creative style. Production and costume designer Catherine Martin's distinctive and flamboyant style is evident across her career, beginning with *Strictly Ballroom* (1992) and more recently in *The Great Gatsby* (2013). Martin specialises in theatrical settings and designs lush, over-the-top costumes. The narratives that result from the collaboration between Martin and Baz Luhrmann would be an excellent focus for this area of study.

When you're surrounded by feathers and sequins and ridiculous Lycra outfits, it's impossible not to have a smile on your face.

Catherine Martin



Figure 6.1 Catherine Martin is well known for her lush production designs and costumes.

Collaboration is a major part of media production. The collaborative nature of media production means that a media product will reflect the distinctive personal style of a range of professionals. Some creators work together often. Stephen Spielberg often collaborates with Tom Hanks, as does Tim Burton with Johnny Depp. Each brings their personal contribution to the screen. Wes Anderson's distinctive directorial style owes much to his casting. Owen Wilson's screwball acting contrasts with Anderson's lush use of mise en scène, while Bill Murray's deadpan delivery works as a counterpoint to the pace and rhythm of these films. Anderson deliberately casts actors he has worked with before in order to add a sense of continuity that is designed to engage audiences. Analysing the collaborative contributions of media creators working in different narrative forms would be an excellent project for this area of study.

History and culture impact on the construction of media stories

Media productions are a reflection of the historical and social contexts in which they were developed. Australia's first colour feature film, *Jedda* (1955), directed by Charles Chauvel, could only have been made at that time. Its representations of Indigenous Australian peoples, the gendered roles of men and women and the portrayal of outback life as tough men's work reflected dominant Australian

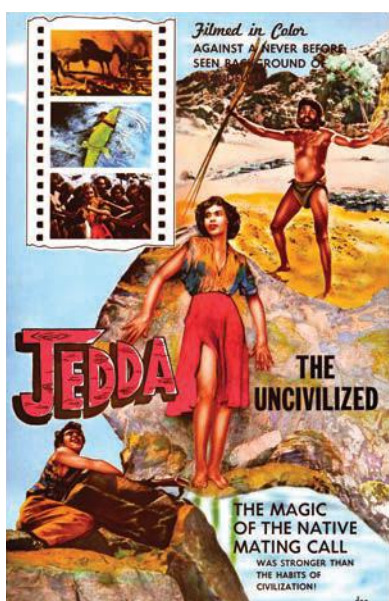


Figure 6.2 Media texts reflect values of the time and place of their production.

values of the mid-1950s. Flash forward to the ABC series *Black Comedy* to see how some values have changed while others have remained constant over the 60 years between these productions. If you are interested in this subject, you could also analyse photo essays depicting Indigenous Australian peoples created by 19th-century photographers and photographic narratives created by Indigenous Australian producers today.

As always, it is about audience

All study of media involves the notion of audience – thinking about what constitutes an audience and how products are constructed and distributed to engage them. However, the idea of audience is currently undergoing a period of significant change. This is clearly apparent when studying the nature and form of media stories in the news. Newspapers and television news have always been a feature of the mass media landscape, but today audiences are increasingly turning online, and especially to social media, as the dominant source of their news. This change in audience behaviour has altered our relationship with news and, as a result, the construction and form of news stories in both traditional and online media has become increasingly personalised in order to engage and maintain audiences.

As you will learn in Chapter 8, television viewing is changing too. The increasing popularity of streamed content has seen significant shifts in the ways audiences consume media as they are no longer tied to program schedules but can choose to watch one episode or binge on many in a sitting. This has led to new long-form storytelling conventions that do not rely on week-old memory between episodes, as is evident in the complex storylines of *Game of Thrones* (2011–). Short-form storytelling, such as Stan's *No Activity* (2015–), has also pushed the boundaries of narrative conventions because each episode is less than 25 minutes in length, which means that audiences generally choose to watch several episodes one after the other.

SELECTING NARRATIVES TO ANALYSE

When selecting media narratives to analyse, there are a number of approaches. Choose stories that engage you; after all, you will be spending a significant amount of time with them. You must select at least two narratives, each in a different media form. Here are some approaches to consider. A model to help you select your stories is provided in Activity 6.1.

Vive la différence

You may choose stories that are completely different from each other in form and style, such as a radio documentary podcast like those found at the ABC Earshot site and a series of narrative photographs such as Max Dupain's *Beaches*. There is no requirement to compare your stories, so this approach will allow you to develop analytical skills across different media and story forms. If you are not sure which media forms or stories you want to create for Outcome 2, Narratives in production, studying media forms that are new to you might be a rewarding approach.



Weblink

Same story, different form and genre

On the other hand, you may choose to study one story that has been constructed in different media forms and genres, such as news coverage of an event and a subsequent dramatisation of that event on television. For example, you may want to study the *Herald Sun* coverage of Melbourne's gangland murders and then analyse David Michôd's feature film *Animal Kingdom* (2010) or the television series *Underbelly* (2008), both of which were based on the same story. If this approach seems interesting, you can get the historical background at Ergo, a State Library site. If you are interested in fictional narratives, why not examine *Mad Men* and the many fan-created wikis and Twitter account narratives, or perhaps a TV or film version of *Pride and Prejudice* and the *Lizzie Bennet* YouTube series?

Narrative reboots

Some stories just keep on giving. Is it the enduring nature of the narrative or the opportunity to cash in on what has come before that leads producers to narrative stories that can be recycled in a range of media forms? The nature of the form, the time and place of production and distribution alter not only the



Figure 6.3 True crime stories are popular with audiences.

construction of the story but also the emphasis placed on themes and characters. Audience engagement with and reading of the story also changes according to the time and place of construction.

HBO's streamed television series *Westworld* (2016–18) is based on the 1973 film of the same name. Foxtel's 2017 reworking of the 1975 film *Picnic at Hanging Rock* into a series is a very different narrative from the original. The time and technologies of production as well as the format of distribution significantly alter audience engagement with stories. Gamers may like to analyse *The Walking Dead* in game form and as a television series. How does the form of a game – where players have **agency** over their actions – change the nature of the story?

Genre

Stories in the same genre but constructed in different media forms allow for analysis of how the technical and symbolic codes and conventions of the genre are expressed by stories in each form. How is the neo-noir genre, for example, constructed in Robert Rodriguez and Frank Miller's film *Sin City* (2005) and in Miller's graphic novel on which it is based? Children's animated action feature *The Lego Movie* (2014) was released at the same time as a game called *The Lego Movie Videogame* (2014). It is the same story in the same genre, but changing the form changes the story.

Different forms and genres, similar stories

Selecting stories in different forms and genres provides the opportunity to analyse key elements of story structure and develop the skills of applying them widely to any text in any form. Stories in very different genres can sometimes result in remarkably similar themes and structures. What do the stories in *South Park* have in common with popular sitcoms such as *Modern Family*? Can you find the story links between the nightly news and Matthew Saville's gritty drama *Noise* (2007) or the narrative themes at the heart of a reality TV series and that of *Neighbours*?

Similar story structures across forms

Students may enjoy studying media stories in different forms to learn how the structures of these stories use similar symbolic and technical codes and conventions to engage their audiences. Taika Waititi's charming action film *Hunt for the Wilderpeople* (2016), Rosemary Myers' *Girl Asleep* (2016) and television series *The Family Law* (2016–17) and *Upper Middle Bogan* (2013–16) all use the narrative structure of 'coming of age' stories to reveal truths about the human condition.

Same story, same author, different media form

Stories written and presented by the same commentator in newspapers and on television are told differently. *Herald Sun* columnist Andrew Bolt shares many elements of his distinctive storytelling style with Andrew Bolt the television presenter, but the nature of the form changes the construction of his stories and, as a result, audience engagement.

Digital stories are different

Online news stories, while retaining many of the same codes and conventions of their print counterparts, are very different from the version we read in the newspaper. Even if the story is the same, audiences consume the narrative differently. Print publications, as tangible media, cannot employ the storytelling opportunities afforded by the use of video that intangible media forms such as online newspapers and television use. However, they do have the power of page layout to suggest meaning that is currently not possible in digital newspaper formats. Look at stories in the online version of *The Age* and a physical copy or digital replica of the print version on the same day. Analysis of the structure and placement of stories in each, as well as accompanying images and advertising, reveals much about the institutional and economic constraints under which news is constructed and distributed.

The auteur is the ultimate in personal style

In cinematic terms, an **auteur** is considered to be a director who has developed a significant body of work that is recognisable by the use of particular codes and conventions. Stanley Kubrick, for example, was known for his use of symmetry in framing shots, as is Wes Anderson today. Although both use symmetry, their works have little else in common except that audiences consider each an auteur and read their stories with an expectation of enjoying their films because of their distinctive style.

Studying the works of auteurs who create stories in different media forms is an engaging way to learn about how personal and distinctive styles are evident in the manipulation of codes and conventions. Wes Anderson, for example, has created a wide body of work in film, stop-motion animation and advertising. Analysing *The Darjeeling Limited* (2007) and Anderson's 2016 Christmas advertisement for H&M or stop-motion animation *Isle of Dogs* (2018) showcases Anderson's personal style as an auteur. Other modern-day auteurs include Christopher Nolan, Baz Luhrmann, Hayao Miyazaki, David Fincher, Joel and Ethan Coen, Sofia Coppola and Edgar Wright. If you wish to study older film narratives, look no further than the work of Hitchcock.

Media professionals and style

One interesting way to examine stories is through the lens of contributing practitioners. Students who are interested in journalism or cinematography, for example, may choose stories in which the work of an individual has featured. In print, a story written by a journalist such as *Herald Sun* journalist Andrew Rule or John Silvester, who writes for *The Age*, will demonstrate a personal style unique to them that is different from the work of other journalists in the newspapers for which they write.

Cinematographer Don McAlpine's very long filmography spans from the early 1970s to the present. He has worked on over 50 films, including *Moulin Rouge!* (2001), *The Chronicles of Narnia* (2005), *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* (2009) and *The Dressmaker* (2015). His work has seen him win many awards, including the AACTA Raymond Longford Award for a lifetime of excellence and achievement. He is the subject of a documentary about his life, *Show Me the Magic* (2016), which is available on iView.



Weblink

Joint investigation

In recent years, the ABC and Fairfax have undertaken joint investigative projects on some of the big stories in Melbourne news. These collaborative projects have afforded greater depth and a variety of stories that would not have been possible for one organisation alone. Each media organisation brings specialist professionals to the task, often with great success. Facets of the story are featured in ABC news and current affairs programming, on television and radio, while the long-form journalism for which *The Age* is famous allows for complex stories in written form. A number of these joint productions have won prestigious Walkley Awards. When analysing stories that are the result of joint investigations or cross-media collaboration, students can assess the contribution that each organisation has brought to the story.

SOCIETY AND CULTURE

Television programming and the advertisements that are screened during programs reveal a great deal about the impact of histories and culture on the creation of media stories. When programs rate well on television, we know that they are reflecting the dominant values of mainstream audiences. The ads are designed to attract the same demographic as the audience. By examining the structure of television programs and their accompanying advertisements in the form of narratives such as the Qantas 'Feels Like Home' or Medibank's 'I feel better' series, it is possible to analyse and reflect on the way personal values relate to individual interest and engagement in narratives across different media texts.

Reality media are the stories of our culture

Reality television is a much-maligned but popular form of storytelling. Few people admit to watching it, but OzTAM ratings prove otherwise. Story structures are carefully designed to appeal to a wide audience demographic, usually families. Among the many formats, reality competition programs such as *MasterChef*, *The X Factor* and *The Block* are constructed as part competition, part game show and part advertising with narrative story lines running throughout. Contestants are cast as potential heroes and villains and developed into characters whose struggles we follow. The hero's journey (see page 254) shapes the codes and conventions that see stories featuring storylines of triumph over adversity with the hope of contestants winning to provide a better life for their families.

Observational reality docudramas such as *Highway Patrol*, *Border Security* and *24 Hours in Emergency* are, on the surface, a record of reality for the people working in the programs. However, they are constructed as narratives designed to teach the audience about the dangers that exist all around us and to urge us to avoid them. For an investigation into story structure, any of these stories would pair very well with a film narrative featuring the same theme.

Reality media have style

My Kitchen Rules is a top-rating series that, during each season, is screened five times a week. All five episodes usually appear in the top 10 rated programs throughout each series. Advertising during the program is among the most expensive on television. Like all reality television, *MKR* shares some structural elements with other texts in the genre while developing a distinctive look and story structure of its own. The program, its presenters and contestants conform to a rigid set of technical codes and conventions that construct a story of family values, the importance of teamwork and the goal of perfection in a style that is instantly recognisable as *MKR* to its audience. Advertisements are designed to match the program aesthetically and in terms of story structure, which reinforces *MKR*'s style. They are often for products and services that feature in the series. When analysed together, *MKR* and an advertisement or campaign screened during the series can reveal how stories in the reality media genre and in advertising that accompanies these narratives are constructed to engage audiences.

Animation

Most animations are designed for children, but those created as feature-length films usually have a dual audience – children and their parents. Animation made for television is often more child-oriented. The length and types of television animation, together with the times they are screened and the industrial requirement for regular programming, constrain the production process, leading to stories that can be formulaic and quickly produced. An analysis of the structure of animated narratives made for different media reveals how they relate to our culture and especially our cultural views about children.

Animations made for wider audiences and adults are a fascinating area for investigation. Richard Linklater's *A Scanner Darkly* (2006), Adam Elliot's *Mary and Max* (2009) and Wes Anderson's *Fantastic Mr. Fox* (2009) reveal how the form and structure of narrative elements in animated stories for adults can be as varied as the stories themselves.

ADAM ELLIOT, AN ACADEMY AWARD-WINNING ANIMATOR

Adam Elliot, the creator of *Harvie Krumpet* (2003) and *Mary and Max* (2009), is a media artist.

After working in illustration and graphic design, Adam decided to follow his heart rather than his head when he enrolled at film school to study animation.

For most of the years after he graduated from the Victorian College of the Arts in 1996, he earned so little that he was eligible for unemployment benefits. Despite being awarded honours such as Young Australian of the Year – State Representative for his achievements in filmmaking, the Medibank Private Arts Award in 1998 and the annual Film Victoria Greg Tepper Award for outstanding achievement by an emerging filmmaker in 1999, Adam received little financial reward from his work. That was to change in 2004 when *Harvie Krumpet* won the Academy Award for best animation.

The days following *Harvie Krumpet* saw Adam rejecting many offers for commercial projects, especially TV ads. He continued to follow his heart because ‘If I say yes to these types of offers, they get in the way of making films.’ In 2006 *Harvie Krumpet* was included in the Annecy International Animation Festival’s Top 100 animated films of all time.

Although this struggling artist has ‘made it’, success has come at a cost. The business side of the industry eats into Adam’s creative time. The success of *Harvie Krumpet* meant that future projects were slowed by the very business that makes it possible for Adam to keep going. To manage the business of his creativity, Adam works with producer Melanie Coombes of Melodrama Pictures.

Mary and Max, Adam’s first feature-length work, a 92-minute ‘clayography’, took almost five years from script to screen to make. The shoot ran for 57 weeks with a production crew of 50 people working together to produce an average of two-and-a-half minutes of animation a week. Each of the six animators on average created four seconds a day.

There are approximately 132 480 individual frames in the film, which was shot on six high-resolution Canon digital still cameras on 10 animation stages.

Mary and Max was a huge undertaking, financed by Screen Australia, Film Victoria, SBS Television and Adirondack Pictures. It screened at the Sundance and Berlin Film Festivals. For Adam, it is a long way from his first job hand-painting T-shirts at the local craft market.

Adam offers this advice to students starting out in the media:

Read, read, read! Students are very focused on the technology and they are all fantastic at using it and a lot can draw really well but the thing that seems to be lacking is the storytelling. Not enough students read. I spend just as much time writing my stories as I do turning them into images. Don’t put pressure on yourself to come up with an award-winning film too early. Nothing happens overnight. Keep persisting. Begin writing and get some life experience.

Find out more about Adam’s work and see his beautiful animations on his website, Adam Elliot’s Clayographies.



Weblink



AAP Image/icon Film Distribution, Melodrama Pictures

Figure 6.4 *Mary and Max* (2009)

Sport

Sporting stories in the media are among the most highly stylised and popular media productions. They take a simple game and construct it into an epic battle between winners and losers, battlers and talented stars, heroes and villains. No matter what the form, the codes and conventions used to construct sporting narratives are well defined.

Sports photography makes effective use of long lenses to bring the contest into close-up, blurring the background to isolate combatants and saturating colour to suggest that the struggle is a form of hyper reality, as the images on page 58 demonstrate.

Sports is human life in microcosm.

Howard Cosell, sports journalist

Televisual sporting stories are constructed through highly codified structural conventions that are dictated by both the sport and the institutional and economic constraints of television programming. Multi-camera footage, action replays and slick commentary are edited together in real time with graphics of game statistics to create a highly engaging spectacle. Ads are seamlessly inserted into breaks in play and the whole production creates a drama that engages fans, even when little is happening on-field. Sporting stories constructed in different media forms, such as photography, television and radio, can reveal a great deal about our culture and the industrial, economic and social factors that impact on their creation.

Documentary: stories about stories

Documentaries are popular in film, television and online. Because they are stories about stories, documentaries are a fascinating way to investigate narrative across media forms. You may even like to study the following example, a story about the story of a man whose life is all about stories.

David Stratton is Australia's best known and most beloved film critic. Sometimes harsh but always honest, Stratton gives credit where credit is due. Since arriving in Australia in 1963, Stratton has made Australian films his passion. A 2017 documentary, *David Stratton: A Cinematic Life*, explores his journey and the stories of Australian cinema. This documentary could be studied alongside one of the films he discusses and a photographic series about one of the themes around which the documentary is structured. It is available on iView.

Being an outsider is an enduring theme in Australian cinema, tales of the struggle we all face to fit in and belong. I feel a deep affection for Australian films. They are, in a way, the movies that made me.

David Stratton

Audio narratives: seeing with our ears

Audio narratives are personal; they seem as if they are made just for us. They are also portable and private. Who knows what others are listening to on the train? The nature of audio means that, in order not to miss anything, audiences must be silent consumers. Headphones have changed the nature of engagement with and the quality of audio representations in audio narratives, allowing producers to create depth and detail in the sounds that they construct, confident that listeners will be able to hear every detail.

Audio narratives may be fictional or factual; both are popular. ABC Radio National program *Earshot* features documentaries on a wide range of topics, from the wonderful to the bizarre. BBC Radio has a long tradition of audio in both fiction and non-fiction form. These include drama, comedy and documentaries. In the United States, NPR has a huge catalogue of audio stories; under 'programs & podcasts', click on 'storytelling & humor'.

Some old favourites remain popular. *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (1978–80) by Douglas Adams was first broadcast on BBC. It was later released as a novel, in comic book form, as a television series and as a film. If you are into comedy and science fiction, this narrative, which has been told in so many forms, will be for you.



Weblink

CONDUCTING AN INVESTIGATION: A HOW-TO GUIDE

Use the following activities to conduct and structure your investigation. Your teacher will provide guidance about the extent and depth required to achieve this outcome.

Activity 6.1 Research

The selection of your narratives is the first step in the process of investigation. There are so many to choose from and, although it might seem easier to simply select your favourite stories, it is worth spending some time researching the possibilities before making a decision.

Use the following media forms to brainstorm the possibilities and limitations of analysing texts in each:

- moving image, such as film, television, video, animation
- still image, such as photography
- audio, such as radio, podcast
- print, such as magazine, zine, comic, graphic novel, newspaper, poster
- digital/online, such as online video and audio, streaming video and audio, podcast, magazine, comic, graphic novel, newspaper, video game, blog, website, app
- convergent or hybridised media.

Factors that inform your decision could include:

- What do I enjoy in this form?
- What story styles and genres engage me?
- What do I know about this form and what would I like to know?
- How would I go about investigating narratives in this form?
- What technologies would I use when accessing, investigating and creating an analysis?
- What are the possibilities for presenting my investigation?

When you have decided on the two forms you wish to investigate, it is time to look at the styles and genre of media you are interested in. Choose from the following:

- fiction, such as film or television narratives, photo stories, comic books, graphic novels or games
- non-fictional narratives, such as news, current affairs, instructional or educational stories, documentary, photographic reportage or reality media
- advertising in any form, which usually is constructed from a combination of fictional and non-fictional elements.

After narrowing down the possibilities, it is time to make a decision on the two narratives you will investigate.

Activity 6.2 Create a proposal

Write a proposal that outlines your research and provides the following information for your teacher. Use the material you have gathered as part of your research to support your proposal.

Points to include:

- the media forms you will investigate
- the titles and producers of the two narratives you have selected
- the reasons you have chosen to analyse these narratives
- what you expect to learn from your investigation (refer to the key knowledge and skills on page 146)
- how you will go about your investigation and details of any resources you will need
- your method of presentation.

When your teacher has approved your proposal, you may proceed.

Activity 6.3 Investigating stories

This activity is designed to provide a methodology for your investigation.

1 *Consuming and reading your stories*

Watch, listen to, play or read the narratives you have chosen to analyse. Make notes about how you read and have engaged with each narrative. If possible, research how other audiences have read and engaged with the story at the time of its release. What historical and cultural factors influenced your reading of each narrative?

2 *Analyse the structure of each story*

Identify and unpack the manipulation of codes and conventions to suggest meaning. Use your learning from Chapters 1, 3 and 5 to inform your understanding of how narratives are constructed. You will find detailed information about how story and production codes and conventions are constructed in Chapter 9.

3 *Research the contributions of media professionals*

For some media stories, the individual style of their producers will be a significant part of your analysis; for others, your focus will be on the institutional, economic, social and/or political constraints under which they have been created.

4 *Media stories are a product of the time and place of their creation*

Examine how each story relates to the cultural and historical context in which it was created.

Questions you might ask yourself include:

- What was society like at the time? What were its values and beliefs and how are these represented in the narrative? How do these factors influence audience interest in and engagement with each narrative?
- How does this story relate to the development of media stories and technologies?

Activity 6.4 Presenting your investigation

Once you have all of your research and analysis complete, it is time to put it all together. You may present your research in any form you choose. Think about the best way to demonstrate your learning to your teacher and your classmates.

It is likely that you will use one or more of the following in your presentation:

- written analysis in the form of an essay, reflection or answers to the questions above
- visual representations and examples in the form of images or diagrams
- audiovisual or video sequences, such as a vlog or an illustrated visual essay
- visual analysis on paper, such as a poster or infographic or a print layout
- multimedia presentation
- online presentation, such as a web page, blog or using a presentation app
- audio presentation in the form of a podcast
- oral presentation.

Select the presentation methods that best allow you to demonstrate your deep learning.

OUTCOME 2

On completion of this unit the student should be able to apply the media production process to create, develop and construct narratives.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 2.

KEY KNOWLEDGE

- media production processes and their relationship to specific media forms
- construction of narratives using the media production process
- the roles and responsibilities required in different stages of the media production process
- technical skills used in the operation of media technologies
- ethical, legal and community constraints in the production and distribution of media products
- media language appropriate to the design, production and evaluation of media products.

KEY SKILLS

- design and produce narratives using the stages of the media production process
- undertake roles and responsibilities within the media production process
- apply technical skills in the operation of media technologies
- develop and produce narratives within ethical, legal and community constraints
- use media language appropriate to the design, construction, production and evaluation of media productions.

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This chapter is about production ideas and activities that build on the concepts covered in Chapter 6. Information about conceptualising and describing your audiences, media design, pre-production, production and post-production processes is detailed in Chapter 2. Use the techniques and conventions outlined there to help you design and create production activities for this outcome.

For most of the activities in this chapter, you may work alone or in production teams, as directed by your teacher, but for each activity don't just think of it as a class task, consider working towards a wider audience. There are lots of film festivals and competitions, youth festivals and community events that are a perfect place to distribute your productions. Think about your social media feeds and online opportunities to publish your creations to entertain, educate or provoke an audience. After all, this is Media – it is all about getting your message out there!

Production resources, including storyboard and photographic mock-up masters, shot lists, call sheets, talent release forms and tips and tricks for working with technology, can be found on NelsonNet. Your teacher will guide you as to the activities you will work on, building skills from simple tasks to complex productions.



Scaffold

IN THE BEGINNING – AND IN THE END – IT IS ALL ABOUT THE AUDIENCE

For each of the activities in this chapter, you should create an audience statement. Your goal is to engage your audience. Productions will be constructed for this audience, and every role you undertake at each stage of production will keep the needs and desires of your audience at the front and centre of your work. Now would be a good time to reread the section on audience in Chapter 2.

Working ethically and within community constraints

All media productions are subject to the values of the organisation, industry and community in which they are created. As you design and create your productions, you may find that you come across ethical dilemmas in regard to the subject matter of your proposed productions and how this subject matter may be treated. Each school community is different. Discuss the expectations of your community with your teacher, who has the responsibility of green-lighting your productions. All potential productions are subject to his or her approval.

When planning productions, be aware that some subject matter can be controversial or better suited to the work of media professionals. Keep in mind that all subjects and participants deserve to be treated with dignity and respect.

Media producers are constrained by the law and occupational health and safety guidelines, and so are you. You cannot put yourself, your cast or crew in any illegal situation or potential danger. Ethical behaviour and community values should always be part of your media production experiences.

Activity 7.1 Audiences call the tune

In small groups, research the needs and desires of your class as an audience. How and where do they consume media? What do they like to watch, read, play and listen to? What is their taste in fashion and food? Where do they like to hang out? What activities and responsibilities do they engage in out of school?

Use your research to create a detailed audience statement that you can use when making media for an audience of your peers.

Activity 7.2 Media production team for hire

Schools are a wonderful source of stories that can be used for promotion, instruction or education. In any school there are always unmet media production needs. Many schools have no idea how to actually make the stories they want to tell. This is your chance to create media and help your school.

Form your class into small production teams and offer your services around the school. Some jobs you might tender for are:

- producing the school magazine or newsletter
- lunchtime radio
- documenting sports days, drama performances or music nights
- creating promotional material for different subjects or faculties
- producing instructional videos, websites or print materials
- creating promotional material to use in feeder schools or on the school website
- designing and creating school memorabilia
- producing documentary records of classroom events, such as oral presentations and science experiments.

When your team is offered a job, undertake the production process with the needs of your client and audience in mind. Remember, if you approach each job in a professional manner you are likely to be employed again.

Make sure you rotate production roles to ensure that everyone in the team gets a turn at the creative, technical and organisational sides of media production.



Figure 7.1 Sports carnivals are often looking for high-quality reportage.

Activity 7.3 Promote yourselves

For each of the production teams your class created in Activity 7.2, develop and produce promotional material that sells the team, its skills and creative vision to the school community.

By developing and creating first-class examples of the types of productions you are offering, you will demonstrate your skills and engender confidence in those school community members you want as potential clients.

Activity 7.4 Promote your school

This task is designed to show your school what your production team can do. Work alone or in pairs to make an advertisement for your school. Your audience is prospective students and their parents, but your aim is to showcase your skills to the school community.

Design and produce one of the following:

- a 30-second video ad
- an A3 poster
- a two-fold pamphlet.

Lesson 1

Think about how your school should market itself to prospective students and their parents.

- What do they want to see in a school?
- What does each of these groups want to know about the school?
- What are the strengths of your school's current marketing?
- What does current marketing leave out?
- What do you wish you had known before you enrolled?

Design your advertisement. Your design should include:

- an audience and intention statement
- a script and a storyboard for video
- copy and mock-ups of pages for print.

Remember to use the school logo. Choose copyright-free music.

Lesson 2

When your design has been approved by your teacher, shoot your video or images and upload them to a computer. Edit your productions.

Lesson 3

Finish editing and show your rough cut to your teacher and classmates, who will act as critical friends to suggest improvements. Act on these suggestions and then export or print your production.

Arrange a time for the school principal or publicity department to see and comment on your work.

Activity 7.5 Read all about it, learn all about it: good news stories

The best way to find out about newspaper production is to produce one! By the time you are working on this outcome, life at school is pretty busy, people are stressed and they need some good news. Why not create a school newspaper to cheer them up?

Form a production team to create a school newspaper to be distributed within your school once a week until the end of semester.

Allocate specific roles in the production of this newspaper.

Once production roles have been decided, create a production flow chart and timeline so that everyone on the production team knows what they have to do and when they have to do it.

Don't forget the importance of advertising and marketing. Find out what it will cost to print your newspaper and seek advertising from school groups to help cover the cost. If you are modelling your newspaper on industry practice, you should be able to cover between 70 and 100 per cent of your production costs through advertising.

Decide on a style that suits the needs of your audience at this time.

Design a template that you can use for all editions. Produce and distribute a newspaper crafted to the twin needs of your readership and advertisers. If you have screens around the school, you might consider producing a digital version.

Test the reaction of your audience after the first edition and use this feedback for the next edition. Remember, your news is designed to engage and encourage your audience.

Be a storyteller, think symbolically

There is an old adage in media production: show don't tell. This is fine, but when beginning media makers think of stories they tend to be literal in their interpretation. The best directors, photographers, podcast producers and writers do not show everything; instead, they suggest meaning and take their audience on a storytelling journey rather than simply recording each point in the story.

There is power in suggestion. Reveal just enough for the audience to become part of your story as they join the dots that you provide. When you don't put the dots too close, you allow the audience to create much of the narrative in their head while still engaging with what is on the screen or page. This technique is much more effective than revealing too much. Your audience is as experienced in reading the symbolic codes of media as you are. It is important to respect their knowledge. Why not try it?



Sandra Tran

Figure 7.2 Sandra Tran combined symbolic elements for the cover of her magazine. What do you think she was saying?

Activity 7.6 Everyday to extraordinary – in an hour!

This is a fast activity to force you to think creatively, symbolically and definitely outside the box. Below is a list of narrative topics based on everyday objects you will find around your school. Work in pairs for this task. Randomly distribute a topic to each pair, who then have 15 minutes to create a storyboard that makes the topic interesting. Once your storyboard has been approved by your teacher, you will have one hour to shoot and edit your story. Good luck!

The topics are:

- stairs
- windows
- chairs
- floors
- bins
- doors
- paths
- tables
- corridors
- fences
- gates
- signs
- whiteboards.

Activity 7.7 Fairytales are about the power of suggestion

Some narratives remain popular for student media makers. These include fairytales and children's stories. This task is about designing and creating a story for an audience of your peers based on one of these stories, such as *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, *The Three Little Pigs* or *Beauty and the Beast*. You may work alone or in a team. Your teacher will give you a time frame in which to complete the task.

Choose a story and brainstorm or workshop all the ways the story could be interpreted given the time and resources available to you. Create some preliminary sketches of two approaches, a literal interpretation and a symbolic one. Show the sketches to your class and seek feedback. Remember, when thinking symbolically the meaning of the shots that you imagine may not be clear to your audience at all. Amend the sketches.

Create a production design for your proposed narrative. When given the green light, go ahead and produce it.

MEDIA PROFESSIONALS HAVE THEIR OWN STYLE

As you learnt in Chapter 6, many media professionals have developed a personal or signature style over their careers. The following activities explore personal style and how those working in the media learn from those who have come before.

For me, the romantic comedies I love are the ones that pay homage to the genre, but also find their ways to twist it and tweak it.

Greg Berlanti, producer of *Pan* (2015)

Homage

In media terms, **homage** means paying respect or demonstrating admiration of a practitioner whose work you admire. Homage can take the form of a reference, the use of a particular technique or style or imitation of that practitioner's work.

Everyone working in the media learns from those who have come before. We absorb ideas and techniques as we engage with media texts and try them out when we begin to create our own productions. As Quentin Tarantino says, 'When people ask me if I went to film school I tell them, no, I went to films.'

Think about the personal style and defining techniques of the media professionals you admire and share them with your classmates. Perhaps you could create a homage wall in your classroom. Add to the wall as you learn more about media production.

PRACTICAL TIP

There is a fine line between homage and rip-off. Be informed by the work of others, don't just copy them.

Activity 7.8 Paying respect to the masters

Choose a media practitioner you admire whose work is visually distinctive. Some suggestions are listed below.

Filmmakers

- Alfred Hitchcock
- Stanley Kubrick
- Hayao Miyazaki
- Baz Luhrmann
- Tim Burton
- Quentin Tarantino
- Wes Anderson

Research the work of this practitioner and create an illustrated list of their stylistic preferences and techniques.

Design and create an image or video sequence that incorporates but does not copy a visual technique used by the auteur you have researched. Show your classmates to see if they can identify the source of your homage.

Photographers

- Edward Weston
- Ansel Adams
- Max Dupain
- Annie Leibovitz
- Martin Parr
- Dorothea Lange
- Cindy Sherman

Stop-motion animated narratives

Stop-motion animation is a wonderful way to demonstrate your individual style and it is now easier than ever before to create stop-motion stories by using your phone. You can download apps from iTunes or Google Play or you can import your images into an editing program. Why not try it? There are some awesome stop-motion videos on Instagram. Simply use #stopmotion to find inspiration.

Big ideas, small stories

One challenge that all media makers face is how to convey a really big idea concisely. Daily newspapers, nightly news and social media feeds are full of really important stories that have been compressed into a minute, an image or 100 words. How can a big idea be so constrained by the conventions of media production and distribution yet still effectively engage its audience? The answer lies in the use of symbolic codes and conventions, including metaphor.

Activity 7.9 From a lump of coal to a fine diamond

Choose one of the stories listed below. Your task is to work in two media forms to design and construct fictional or non-fictional media narratives incorporating the idea as concisely as you can without losing any of its complexity. You may like to revise the codes and conventions of media representation discussed in Chapter 3 to help you with this task.

- Global warming
- The abuse of power
- Inequality
- Animal rights

Your audience is your classmates and you will produce a narrative in two of the following forms:

- two photographs
- a poster
- a news story of 100 words
- an audiovisual product of 30 seconds in length.

When you have completed your productions, share them with those classmates who worked on the same topic. Analyse the use of symbolic codes and metaphors in each work. Which media forms were easier to work in?

DOCUMENTARY STORIES

Documentaries in intangible media forms

Video and website documentaries are an exciting and creative media genre in which to work that have several advantages for student media producers. The first of these is that they eliminate the creative screenwriting process. Documentary scripts are formatted differently from those of narratives and are often created after filming has been completed. For those who struggle with screenwriting, this is a bonus. The second advantage is that the talent featuring in documentaries are in control of their area of expertise, which shines through on screen or in audio. Most students cannot cast professional actors in their productions and, although it is fun working with your classmates, their acting may not be as authentic as you had imagined. Student documentaries usually have a sense of authority and realism that audiences appreciate.

If you are interested in documentary media production, see Chapter 2 for details of the process.

Creating documentaries in tangible media forms

Photo essays and **long-form journalism** are styles in the documentary genre. Often a feature of weekend newspapers and magazines, these media products allow a subject to be explored in depth or in a creative way. Documentary photography can also be found in galleries and exhibitions.

Tangible or space-based documentary media narratives allow the audience to structure their consumption of a product as they choose. Individuals may move quickly through the work or linger on particular aspects of it; they may return to images or text in order to give them greater thought.

Activity 7.10 Documentary narratives in video, photography or print

Form small production teams to design and produce a documentary of up to five minutes in length, including titles and credits, or a documentary print production of up to eight pages, or a documentary photo essay of up to 10 images on one of the following topics:

- Nature
- Fans
- A day in the life ...
- What it is like to live ...
- An unusual person, hobby, sport or idea
- My place.

You may interpret the topic in any way you choose.

Before your team begins pre-production, pitch your proposal to your teacher in a document that outlines the following information:

- the names of team members
- the media form in which you are working
- the working title of your production





- the subject of your production, why you chose this subject and details of what you know about this subject before you begin
- the impact you hope to have on your audience
- the roles that each team member will perform
- a timeline for the completion of pre-production documentation and for the production process.

When you get the green light from your teacher, you may begin pre-production. Use the production design information in Chapter 2 to help you structure these documents.

When everyone has completed their productions, hold an exhibition of your works.

ADVERTISING STORIES

Advertisers are among the greatest storytellers of our time. Advertising informs, persuades, competes and entertains. It informs consumers about products and services or persuades them to change their behaviour. In competition with thousands of other messages directed at the consumer, it must engage and entertain. To cut through information overload and create awareness and interest for a product or service requires considerable creative skill.

At its simplest, an ad is a story that creates and then solves a problem. Ads often work on this simple narrative structure:

- Problem: hunger
- Solution: product
- Consumption: buy and consume product
- Resolution: hunger alleviated, happy customer.

This cycle is repeated over and over for products ranging from junk food to diets, from green energy to muscle cars. The hunger can take any form, and it is always the product that solves it. The job of advertising is to promote a solution, but to study ads without looking at the bigger social picture is misleading.

The advertising process is the result of a whole range of problems, solutions and consumption patterns within the commercial framework of society. When a consumer is hungry, they make choices based on the severity of their need, the availability of foods, practical and emotional cues about what is good and bad food based on family upbringing and education, money, time, values and so on. Similarly, the company that commissions an ad operates within constraints based on the bottom line: if it doesn't sell products, it will not make a profit and will go out of business. Companies compete for sales with an understanding of the social and financial constraints of the customer.

What has all this got to do with producing media narratives?

There are many more specialist roles in the advertising production process than first appears, some of which you can experience in the classroom.

Activity 7.11 Socks everywhere – but can you find a pitch?

Australians buy over half a million pairs of Holeysocks socks every week! Half a million pairs is a very big pile of socks – there is a serious market for such an ordinary yet necessary product. How do consumers decide which socks to buy?

Work in a production team to design an advertising campaign that sells socks. Your campaign should include print ads for each daily Melbourne newspaper and digital ads for use online.

Investigate the readership of the newspapers to determine the best way to engage these audiences.

Your team should include the following roles. Research what each person does before allocating roles.

- Market researcher
- Art director
- Photographer
- Copywriter
- Layout editor
- Online editor
- Print manager

Print your ads and publish your online versions, then compare them with those of other teams in your class. Evaluate the advertisements created by each team.



iStock.com/beijingstory

Figure 7.3 Can you sell socks?

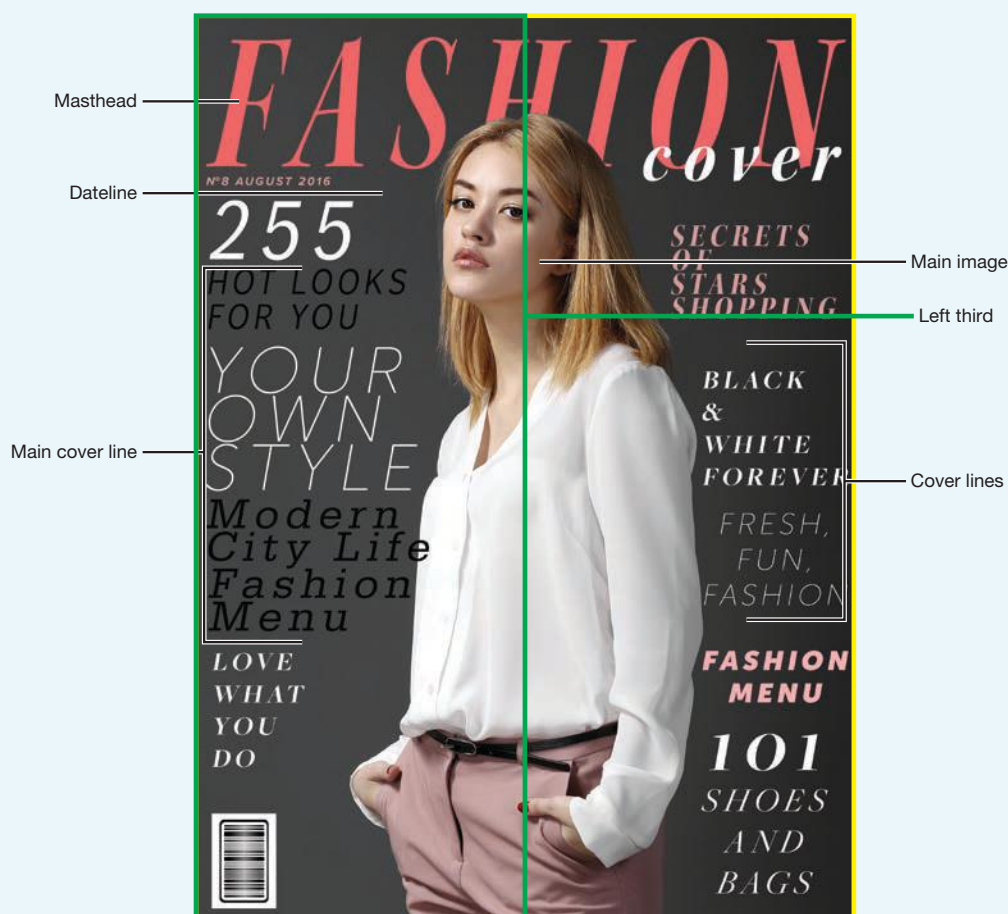
Activity 7.12 Magazine cover: the story of you!

A fabulous way to tell your story is through the media form of print. This task is about designing and creating a magazine cover for a new publication with your name as its masthead.

Use the audience profile created for Activity 7.1 and begin by researching magazine cover styles. You will see that the layout is generic; almost all magazine covers are designed with the same layout.

Create sell lines and cover lines for articles in the magazine that represent your personal narrative. Use the cover lines to tell your story.

Design and get a classmate to take a flattering image of you. Photoshop it to enhance yourself. Create the cover and print it. Display all covers in the classroom.



Shutterstock.com/Africa Studio

Figure 7.4 Ensure that your design has all of the generic elements of a magazine cover.

Activity 7.13 Making magazines

Form a print production team or work alone and create a magazine that is designed to construct a narrative through the combination of images and text.

Your first task is to create an audience profile. Who is your audience and what are their needs?

Decide on a theme and plan all contributions to the magazine around that theme. Images and text should be designed to express the underlying narrative either literally or metaphorically through the use of technical and symbolic codes and conventions that suggest meaning.

FICTIONAL NARRATIVES

While almost all media stories are narratives, it is fictional narratives that engage our imagination. The premise is simple: something happens to someone that causes them to do something, which in turn causes something else to happen, and so on until the problem is resolved.

Put more formally, a narrative is a chain of events in cause-and-effect relationships occurring in space and time.

In the opening of fictional narratives, characters, location and a narrative trigger in the form of a problem or issue are introduced. As the narrative develops, audiences learn more about characters and the plot becomes more complex before the problem is finally resolved. There is much more detail about narrative structures in Chapter 9 for those who are interested.

The creative freedom of working in fictional narrative form is often a highlight of the year for Media students. Few media professionals experience this freedom; most work in the production of stories created by others. For every James Cameron there are thousands working as screenwriters, storyboard artists, production designers, cinematographers, editors and in hundreds of other roles that make up a production crew. For now, you will have the opportunity to experience each role and learn how it contributes to the construction of narratives. Let's begin with some small stories.

Activity 7.14 Short narratives based on common scenarios

A number of everyday occurrences are listed below. Select one to design and produce a short fictional narrative around the occurrence in which you establish, develop and resolve the story. Your audience is your peers. The scope of task is a one-minute video or three photographs. Select from the following:

- A chance meeting
- Waiting for the bus
- Turning a corner
- An unexpected present.

Show your production to your classmates and ask each to comment on the following:

- something that really worked in your narrative
- one piece of advice that would make the production better
- a suggestion for developing your media production skills.

Use this advice to develop your learning and make your next production better.

Collaboration

Longer narrative productions usually involve collaboration with others. Working in a team can be challenging for some. Check out 'Working collaboratively' on page 23 for some tips. If you prefer to work alone, the experience of collaborating on some aspect of your narrative will develop valuable skills for the future. Everyone in your class or your wider school community has at least one area of expertise on which you can draw.

As a class, use the board to workshop a list of creative and production skills that exist in your class, the Media department and in the school. Who is good at titles? Who can wrangle InDesign or other software? Who has a good eye for image composition or typography? There will be students who can create music or write well. Create a list of all of these talents and post it in the classroom or on a class web page or Google doc. The next time you need advice, you will know who to turn to.

Activity 7.15 Collaborative narratives

This task can be as long or as short as it needs to be. Ask your teacher about the scope of the task he or she has planned.

Form a production team to design and create a narrative story. Here are some suggested subjects to get you thinking:

- A day becomes eventful ...
- A journey ...
- Suburban bliss ...
- Horror in the garden ...

When the group has decided on a story, pitch it to your teacher and class. Their job is to ask questions and pose possible issues with your story and your production process. Use these questions to test how feasible your story is and whether you have the skills and resources to create it in the allocated time.

When your teacher gives your team the green light, use the media production design process detailed in Chapter 2 to create a formal production design. Don't forget to allocate roles and set a firm timeline for the completion of each task.

When your design is given the go-ahead, move into production and post-production. Remember to be kind and supportive of your team; you are all learning. Keep the dialogue open and work to meet your deadlines. Good luck!

The following activities are for those students who are excited by the possibilities of Chapter 8, Media and change.

Activity 7.16 How has digital media changed the way we learn and live?

Research a digital media phenomenon, such as a Web 2.0 or new media technology. Possible topics include social media, citizen journalism, mobile media technologies, online publication, gaming, virtual communities, new media ethics or collaborative cultural practices. If you would like to make this task a collaborative one, each class member should take one topic.

Your research should cover one or more of the following:

- the nature of the media technology or phenomenon
- the relationship between new media technologies and other technologies
- how audiences use and engage with digital media
- the impact of technological development on individuals, groups and society
- the creative and cultural changes, ethical and legal issues resulting from digital media, such as user-generated content, collaboration, privacy, intellectual property rights, the rights and responsibilities of producers and audiences.

Design and create a presentation outlining your findings in one of the following forms:

- an internet presentation, such as a wiki, blog, social media site, web page or YouTube video
- a podcast
- a video or other audiovisual presentation
- an infographic.

Activity 7.17 In the future, stories will be digital

Design, create and publish a story using only digital technologies. Design, create and collaborate using online tools from, for example, Celtx, Google Docs, ACMI storyboard generator, YouTube video editor, WeVideo or the Adobe Creative Suite. Don't forget to give your teacher access to your planning documents.

Activity 7.18 Go social

Design, create and publish a narrative that can only be consumed on social media. Think of the possibilities of Facebook, Snapchat or YouTube. Share the link with your class and ask for feedback.



OUTCOME 3

On completion of this unit the student should be able to discuss the influence of new media technologies on society, audiences, the individual, media industries and institutions.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 3.

KEY KNOWLEDGE

- the nature and forms of new media technologies and their relationship to traditional media technologies and forms
- characteristics of digital media audiences
- the ways audiences interact and engage with the media as a result of the growth of digital technologies across media forms
- the influence of technological development, media convergence and hybridisation on society, audiences, the individual, media industries and institutions
- social, ethical and legal issues in the media industry in the last two years.

KEY SKILLS

- identify the nature and forms of new media technologies and discuss their relationships to traditional media technologies and forms
- discuss the characteristics of digital media audiences
- explain the ways audiences interact and engage with the media as a result of the growth of digital technologies across media forms
- analyse the influence of technological development, media convergence and hybridisation on society, the individual, media industries and institutions
- analyse social, ethical and legal issues in the media industry in the last two years.

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Communication has changed dramatically since the emergence of the first media technology, the printing press. Each development has allowed increasingly complex stories to be created and shared, beginning with the printed word and then photography, moving images, radio, talkies, videotape and, most recently, digital image and sound. But no change has been so profound as the technological convergence between communication and computation in the form of the internet. The joining of media and computing has heralded a massive change in the ways audiences access, consume, share, make and even think about media. This shift has seen media forms converge and hybridise, allowing new forms and platforms to develop that have fundamentally altered not only the media but audiences and society. How can we make sense of this change and what does it mean for the future?

There is so much to choose from when studying the changes that have altered our media landscape in recent years that it is impossible to cover everything. This chapter aims to introduce the big ideas and technologies related to this area of study. It models a methodology for thinking about media and change that can be applied to any new media form.

BEFORE NEW MEDIA THERE WAS OLD MEDIA

One thing is certain about the media: there is always change. Progress continually offers the tantalising possibility of better, faster, easier and – in an interesting twist – often smaller media technologies. Media teachers and students are often swept up in the pursuit of new technology – it is all so tempting! Ask your Media teacher about their relationship with media technologies. If they are old enough, they may have screened 16-millimetre films in class or owned a Betamax video player. Media is one subject where change is part of what we do and learn; there is always new media. But what do we mean by new media?

New media is the term that has been coined to define digital or computer-based media. It also has a literal meaning: any media form that is new. Today, that invariably means digital technology. It is not possible to list new media. By the time you read this book, some of what is considered new at the time of publication will have been superseded. However, we can learn a lot about changes in our relationship with the media by studying what has come before. Let's start with an audit of old media technologies.

Activity 8.1 Old media technologies never die; they just get hidden in storerooms

We invest so much money and hope for the future in our media technology that when it is superseded we rarely throw it out. Instead, we put it aside thinking that it might be useful 'some day'. Today is the day!

Old media technologies can reveal much about our culture, and by comparing them with newer technologies we can determine why they were superseded, the features that have advanced over time, and those that have become redundant.

- 1 Conduct an audit of old and out-of-date media technologies.
 - Ask your media teacher to help you find all the old media technologies in your school. These might include old cameras and projectors, slide tape players, reel-to-reel tape players and cassette recorders, early video equipment and computers, even manual typewriters and duplicating equipment.
 - Gather this equipment together in one place and arrange it in chronological order.
 - Research the use of these technologies and other media technologies that may have been discarded. Older teachers will provide you with a wealth of information.
- 2 Conduct a similar audit at home.
 - Ask your family about how this equipment was used and what it cost to use.
 - Don't forget to ask your grandparents – they are likely to have old technology stashed in the garage that they would be very happy to demonstrate for you.
- 3 Write a report that outlines the results of your research. Make sure you address the following:
 - What media have replaced these technologies?
 - Compare the ease of use of older media technologies with those that replaced them.
 - Compare the cost of operation of older technologies with those that replaced them. If possible, work out the cost in today's dollars, allowing for increases in the cost of living.
 - Were there any features of these older technologies that were superior?
 - Which features were discarded over time? Why do you think this was the case?





- Which features have developed over time? Research the developmental stages through which each technology progressed.
 - Can you make any predictions from this research about the developmental direction of media technologies in educational settings and in the home?
- Submit your report using one of the forms of technology you have been researching.



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Analogue and digital technology

‘New media’ is the term that is used in reference to digital technologies. Old media is often referred to as ‘**analogue** technology’. What do these terms mean?

Analogue technologies are those that record or store media as objects such as film or tape. They transmit or display voice, video and data using continuous variable signals (such as electricity or soundwaves). Analogue technologies are subject to interference and degradation when copied. That is why VHS video, where images were recorded on magnetic tape, lost quality each time the tape was copied until it became unwatchable. All media technologies created before the 1980s were analogue.

Digital media are those that use computer technology to create, store, transmit or display media as numerical values. Digital media can be reproduced exactly every time because they are reproductions themselves; that is, they are digital representations of their subjects rather than the actual thing. A voice at the end of a digital phone system may sound like your friend, but it is actually a digital representation of your friend’s voice.



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Activity 8.2 Old and new media technologies

Compile a list of all the media technologies your class can think of. Categorise them into analogue and digital technologies.

Create a poster or use an infographic maker to illustrate the history of media technology from books until today.

The remix is the very nature of the digital.

William Gibson, cyberpunk novelist

CHARACTERISTICS OF DIGITAL MEDIA

Digital media have changed the nature of media, audiences and society in a number of significant ways. Digital media technologies affect every aspect of pre-production, production, post-production, distribution and consumption. They also significantly alter the way audiences receive, engage with and understand the media. The characteristics of new media technologies include the following:

- **Quality:** media producers, distributors and consumers are able to make exact copies of any part of a digital media product, such as torrenting copies of a movie without losing any quality.

- **Proliferation:** new media forms and products can be easily created and reproduced, meaning that in new media there are always new types of texts. Recent examples include social and viral media.
- **Interactivity:** media producers, distributors and especially audiences can interact with and contribute to the content of media products such as social media feeds, fan sites and video games.
- **Convergence:** the combination and merging of traditional media forms and/or texts to produce rich media experiences using voice, video and data and to create new forms of texts such as online games, advertising or web series.
- **Hybridisation:** where the convergence of media technologies and/or texts produces a new media form, as happened when the internet combined with digital photography and phones in a social media platform to produce Instagram and Snapchat.
- **Remediation:** the appropriation of one media form and/or text by another media form or text as occurs when a book becomes a film.
- **Immediacy:** the desire of media audiences to be immediately in touch with reality in an apparently unmediated and transparent way. This is found in social media, Twitter and in the comments attached to online material.
- **Hypermediacy:** the tendency of new media to draw attention to itself by multiplying the signs of mediation through, for example, text, sound and graphics on a web page.

Remediation and hypermediacy

The representation of one medium in another medium is termed **remediation**. In new media, remediation refers to digital media's representation of earlier media forms and texts. The creators of this theory, Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, argue that media development borrows from and refashions current and earlier media, and is driven by two trends:

- **Immediacy**, which is the desire of audiences to be immediately in touch with reality in an apparently unmediated and transparent way. This is expressed in forms and texts such as reality TV, social media and instant messaging. True representation of reality has been a goal of media since its inception, which explains why TV used to be called a 'window on the world'. New media tries to achieve the same goals, but with less intervention between messages and audiences.
- **Hypermediacy**, which is the tendency of new media to draw attention to itself by multiplying the signs of **mediation**. Hypermediacy also occurs when older media take on new media codes and conventions, as happens when, for example, TV graphics adopt the layout of websites. A very popular example of hypermediacy is the use of screen static, commonly called 'noise' or 'snow'. This static used to be the result of an interruption to a broadcast and was common on analogue TVs in lounge rooms across the world. Today it has disappeared; digital TVs simply pause when there is no signal. This symbol of the old days of TV is now used as a **trope** to represent danger or death. It is a classic example of hypermediacy.

On the surface, some of the features of new media appear to contradict each other. Take the case of immediacy and hypermediacy – one is about audiences seeking greater reality in the media, while the other emphasises the very mediated nature of communication – but in fact they are more like two sides of the one coin. In order to recognise immediacy, audiences need to be very aware when messages are subject to mediation. In our culture, the media cannot operate in isolation – the relationships between media forms and texts help audiences to read and understand the representations they contain. Immediacy and hypermediacy are part of this relationship.

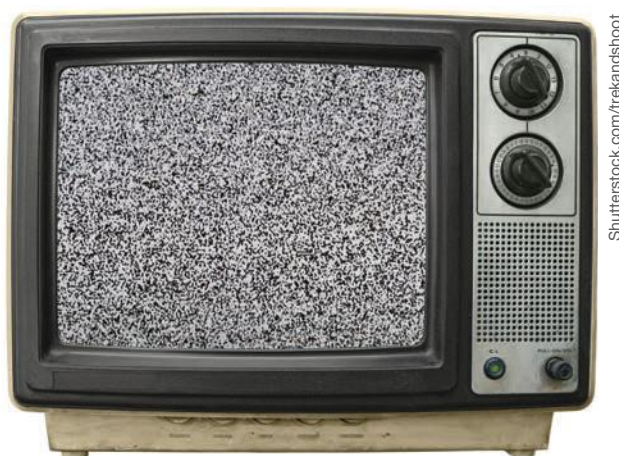


Figure 8.1 Screen snow is now an example of hypermediacy.

Shutterstock.com/trekandshoot

Convergence and hybridisation

While older media technologies continue to exist in their original form, digital techniques and the language of the digital world impact on these technologies at both professional and domestic levels as they converge and hybridise.

Convergence refers to both media forms and texts. It describes the process where technologies converge to change the way media is created, delivered and consumed. **Hybridisation** is the result of the joining of media forms that lead to the development of new media forms, such as photography and social media hybridising to become Instagram.

Media convergence occurs in three ways. The first is the convergence of cultural forms, which is sometimes termed 'textual convergence'. An example of this is drama converging with games shows to become reality programs such as *My Kitchen Rules* or *Survivor*. The second type of convergence is industrial convergence when media industries such as newspapers, television and radio converge, as is the case with most online newspapers, which are constructed using elements of all three forms. The final form of convergence is technological convergence, which is the convergence of communications systems such as telephony (phones) and the internet. Convergence and hybridisation often overlap.

Convergence and hybridisation allow users to both consume and create content through, for example, downloading and watching films and TV on our devices, creating and uploading videos to YouTube and interacting with friends in an increasing number of social media forms.

Traditional media forms, such as television and newspapers, use convergent practices to add content to their programming and to publish for different formats, such as streaming services, the web, tablets and of course mobile phones.

Hybridisation in practice: podcasting

Radio is the original broadcast media. The first radio broadcast, on 24 December 1906 in the United States, was a program of live opera singing. In Australia, public radio broadcasting began in 1919 when radio station 2CM broadcast a series of Sunday night classical music programs. At first, radio was slow to take off because listeners had to pay licence fees and, like all new media, the hardware was expensive. During the Depression, some councils set up listening places in public parks so that everyone could listen to the wonders of this new media form. From the 1930s to the 1960s, radio was the most popular mass media form, especially after technological developments allowed it to become portable through transistor and car radios.

In recent years, while radio remains popular with older listeners and in cars, personal music devices have taken over as the entertainment of choice for younger audiences. Today radio is making a comeback through the hybridisation of radio and the internet in the form of podcasting.

A podcast is a series of digital media files that a user can listen to on a computer or download to a portable media player or smartphone. Users can subscribe to a podcast feed so that new episodes are automatically downloaded and synced to the media player to enable timeshifted listening.

Shutterstock.com/SIM VA



There are podcasts for all ages and tastes. Some are music-based, others hark back to the old days of radio fiction. There are sports podcasts and educational ones. You can learn a language via podcast or listen to stories or groups of friends chatting or ranting and raving about politics. Anyone with a microphone, computer, free software such as Audacity and the internet can make a podcast. You may like to make a podcast as part of your work for this or other outcomes.

The most popular source of podcasts is iTunes. Why not check it out?

Activity 8.3 Podcasts for everyone

Spend an hour or two searching iTunes for a podcast that appeals to you. Subscribe to this podcast and listen to episodes on your way to and from school over the next week. If, after a few episodes, you find the podcast is not for you, try another one.

Share your thoughts with your classmates. Some of them will have found podcasts that may interest you.

Activity 8.4 Characteristics of digital media unpacked

The characteristics of digital media really make sense with a bit of research and some examples. Working in small groups, randomly select one of these characteristics: quality, proliferation, interactivity, convergence, hybridisation, remediation, immediacy or hypermediacy.

Research the term you selected in relation to digital media. Find examples of your term as it applies to media forms and texts.

Create a digital production, such as a video, web page, podcast, blog or Google site, that teaches your classmates about the characteristic of digital media.

No single medium is going to win the battle for our ears and eyeballs

Old media never die but remain part of the media ecosystem, argues Henry Jenkins, Provost's Professor of Communication, Journalism, and Cinematic Arts at USC.

To Jenkins, media convergence is actually five different but interrelated processes:

- Technological convergence is the digitisation of media content that allows media to cross forms and interact in new ways, such as when audiences download music and films from the internet or read an online newspaper.
- Economic convergence is the integration of the entertainment industry with other industries. Large corporations control a range of media and other businesses, which allows for the transmedia exploitation of texts such as *Harry Potter* and *Star Wars*, turning them into multi-marketing phenomena.
- Social or organic convergence is the ability of consumers to multitask. Increasingly, no media experience is purely devoted to one text. Audiences watch TV while talking on the phone and browsing a magazine all at the same time.
- Cultural convergence is the explosion of creativity at the points where media technologies, industries and consumers meet. New music forms have been made possible by digital sampling, and video art can now be created by even the poorest artist due to the availability of high-quality but affordable digital video technologies.
- Global convergence is the cultural hybridity that is made possible through transporting and sharing media products around the world. Although it has been argued that in practice this often means the Americanisation of global culture, there can be no doubt when looking at the world of animation, for example, that convergence means two-way trade.

Henry Jenkins' website and blog are rich sources of information on the impact of new media.

Our focus should not be on emerging technologies but on emerging cultural practices.

Professor Henry Jenkins, University of Southern California



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Activity 8.5 Convergence in your media life

Find and analyse an example of each of the forms of convergence described by Henry Jenkins that have occurred in your media experiences.

Create a class wiki or Google site about media convergence.

CROSSMEDIA AND TRANSMEDIA

Crossmedia is the same story presented in different ways across multiple channels. When a reader logs on to a newspaper website, for example, they may see the same story but it will be formatted differently for a computer screen, tablet or phone.

Transmedia is the publication of self-contained texts across different media platforms that together form a metanarrative. Each text makes use of the features of the media form in which it is published but also contributes to a unified and coordinated user experience. In transmedia stories, audiences gather, collate and even create and publish information leading to a more complete understanding of the story. Transmedia can join commercial productions with those of fans using websites, apps, films, books, comics, web series, games, social media, forums and marketing.

A transmedia narrative project must consist of three or more narrative storylines existing within the same fictional universe.

Producers Guild of America, Code of Credits – New Media



Weblink

Transmedia can be fictional, such as *Star Wars* and *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, or take the form of fan mashups of film or TV shows. It has been used for education, as in *The Autobiography of Jane Eyre*, advertising, as in the ‘Last Selfie’ campaign, and activism, such as the Half the Sky project. SBS transmedia series *Deep Water* combines true crime with drama and online content.

Transmedia in action: ‘Dumb Ways to Die’

In Chapter 3 you looked at the codes and conventions of this advertising campaign, but how did it get the message to audiences? Advertising agency McCann Melbourne created a campaign based on the idea of a long-lasting entertaining message that would create a consistent fan base through the sharing of engaging content.

The first step was the video clip, which was followed by a karaoke version that was played at railway stations. The song was released on iTunes. A phone game, downloadable gifs and children’s book were also released. Tumblr, Instagram and posters were also used. The website asked users to sign the pledge to be safe around trains.

One interesting feature of the campaign was that the animals featured in the clip were not Australian animals. McCann Melbourne knew that to make the message stick in Australia it had to be popular worldwide, not just locally.

Soon users were uploading their own versions of the video clip, which Metro Trains Melbourne encouraged. The campaign resulted in a 21 per cent drop in dangerous behaviour around trains, but McCann believes the biggest success is that it created a language with which the community could talk about public transport safety.

Follow the weblink for an outline of the campaign. You may like to try creating your own public service announcement or campaign.



Weblink



© Metro Trains Melbourne, Dumb Ways to Die.™ All Rights Reserved.

Figure 8.2 ‘Dumb Ways to Die’, the most successful transmedia advertising campaign in Australia



Weblink

Activity 8.6 Transmedia storytelling

Investigate one or more of the transmedia storytelling sites mentioned in the text above to see how they construct their message. Search the web to see if you can find transmedia stories that appeal to you. Share these with your classmates.

Create a group poster, infographic or online visual essay that illustrates the possibilities and limitations of transmedia storytelling.

EXACTLY WHAT IS OUR FAVOURITE ENTERTAINMENT?

In April 2016, consulting firm Deloitte commissioned an online survey to determine media preferences and use among more than 2000 consumers in Australia. The results were compared with surveys from the previous four years (see Figure 8.3). The findings of these surveys inform much of what you are learning in this area of study. One way to understand these results is through the frame of change. Think about what has happened to technology and the way we use each media form over the five-year period of the survey. Think too about how the media reports on changes in technology. You can read about this aspect of media and change in the next few pages.

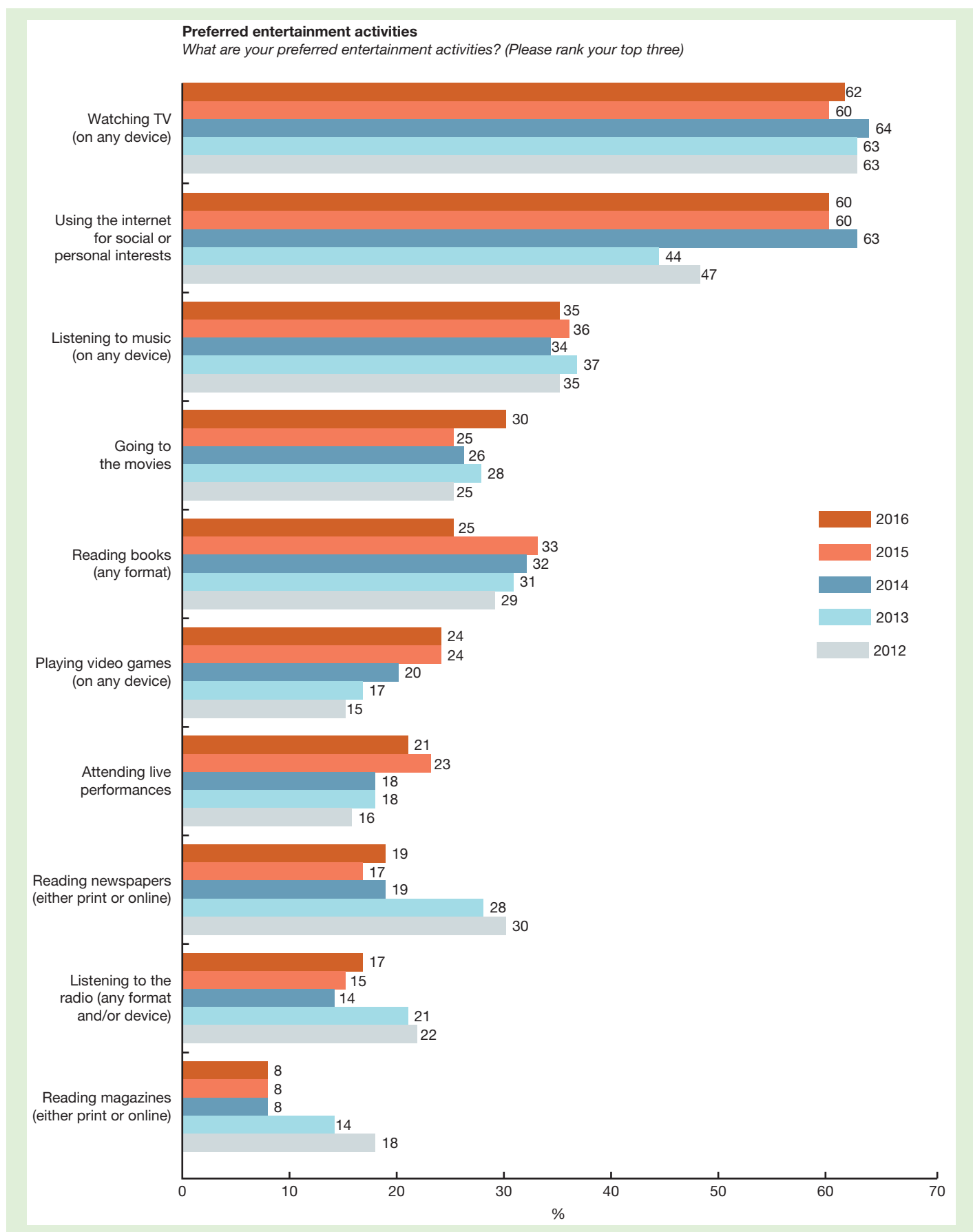


Figure 8.3 Australia's preferred entertainment activities.

Deloitte Media Consumer Survey Report 2016: http://landing.deloitte.com.au/rs/761-IBL-328/images/Media_Consumer_Survey_Report.pdf.

Survey participants were asked to rank their top three entertainment activities. The results reveal that since 2013 television and the internet have been pretty equal, Australians enjoy both above all other pastimes. Listening to music, which came in at number three, has also remained stable.

Going to the movies demonstrates some fluctuation across time, which could be explained by the popularity of films released in any given year. Interestingly, with the exception of 2016, reading books increased gradually over the time of the survey, which might be explained by the article on page 179, 'The Myth of the Disappearing Book'. Radio declined in popularity between 2012 and 2014 but has risen in the last two years, probably as a result of the growing interest in and availability of podcasts.

Video games have shown a steady increase in popularity over the time of the survey. You can find out more about the reasons for this on page 213.

Of particular note is the decline in the popularity of newspaper and magazine reading, even including reading online versions. This may be related to users increasingly getting their news from non-news sites such as Facebook. There is a discussion of this phenomenon on page 197 and on the decline of magazines on page 199.

There are only so many hours in the day

Despite the rise of digital media, TV remains a dominant media form. Australian viewers watch an average of 19 hours of free-to-air and subscription TV a week. However, not all Australian **demographic** groups consume media in the same way. Older Australians watch nearly 30 hours, while teenagers watch about nine. This figure has stayed fairly consistent over the past few years, but the number of hours spent consuming digital media has increased. Audiences now spend almost as much time on the internet as they do watching TV, and there has also been a rise in computer and console gaming. Hours spent watching DVDs and reading magazines have dropped, but this does not account for the rises in other media forms. What is happening to the ways we consume media?



Getty Images/Caiaimage/Chris Ryan

Multitasking is one solution audiences use to manage the ever-increasing number of media options. According to US market research company BIGresearch, consumers regularly simultaneously consume online media, newspapers, magazines, radio, TV and games. You may be multitasking now. Have you glanced at your phone, listened to music or checked Facebook while reading this text?

Ranking of preferred sources of entertainment by generation

What are your preferred entertainment activities?

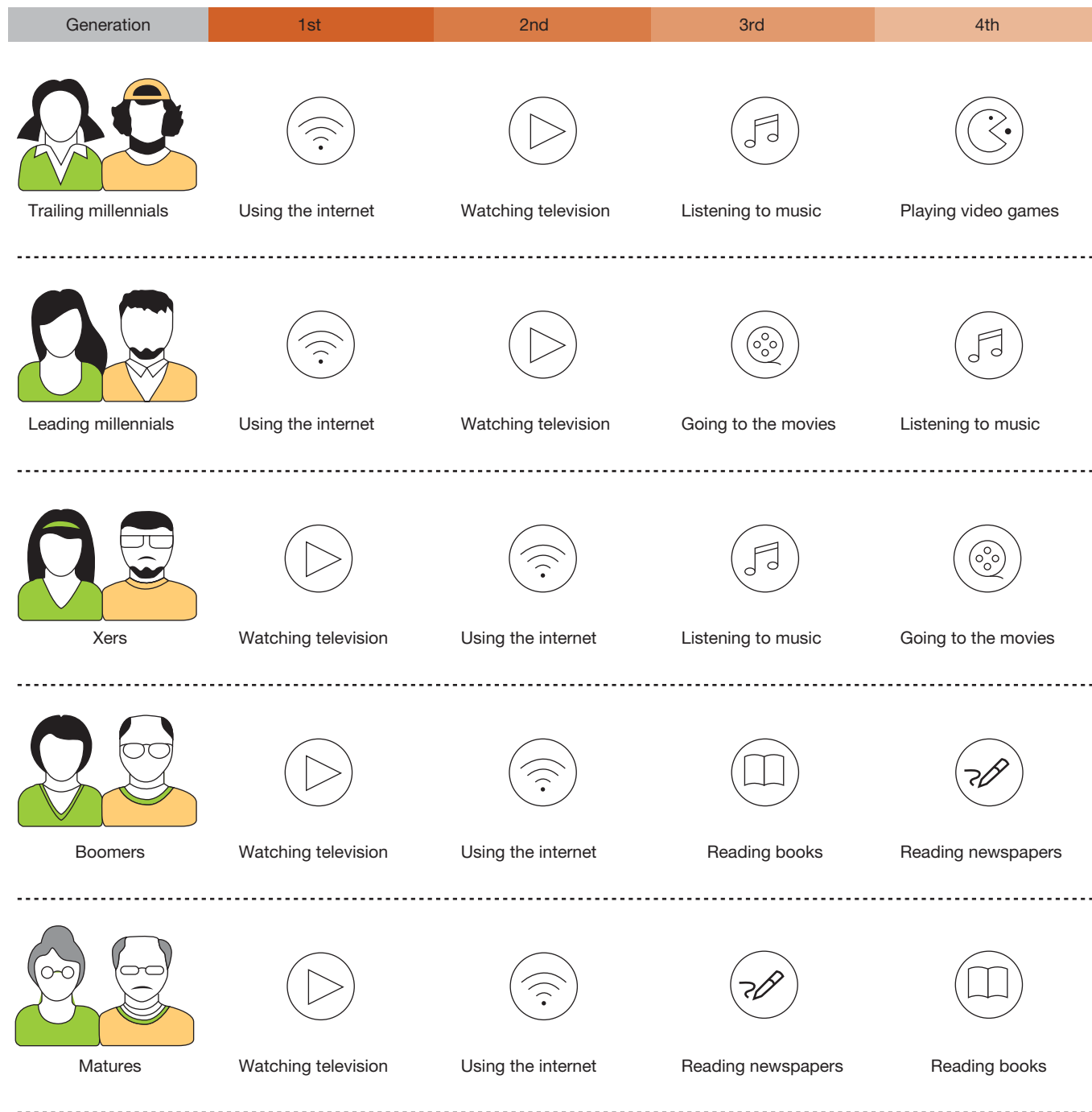


Figure 8.4 Watching TV and using the internet are for the first time equal in preferred entertainment choice. Deloitte Media Consumer Survey 2016 Report: http://landing.deloitte.com.au/rs/761-IBL-328/images/Media_Consumer_Survey_Report.pdf.

Study the infographic in Figure 8.4, in which you can see which age groups prefer certain media. We all have stereotypical views about each of the demographic groups above, but with a bit of research you can find a more precise understanding of their lifestyles and values, which reveals why they prefer some media over others. Have a look at the market research on Australian demographic groups conducted by Roy Morgan, then compare the interests of each group with their preferred media. What does this tell you about media and change?





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You can even go a step further and look at television ratings conducted by OzTAM to see why the top-rated programs are so rarely ones that you want to watch. Report E is the one to look at. Correlating the most popular programs with the information provided in the Deloitte survey reveals that you do not watch as much TV as older Australians and are therefore not the market broadcasters cater for.

If you want to find out more about Australia's relationship with the media, you can follow the link to the Deloitte Media Consumer Survey, which is updated annually.

Activity 8.7 DIY research: media use in your demographic

How typical is your class or students at your school in terms of their media consumption patterns? Why not find out?

In small groups, brainstorm questions for a survey that will tell you about the media use of your peers. Share your questions with other groups to create a really solid survey.

Use an online tool such as Survey Monkey, Google or even Facebook surveys to conduct the research and then analyse your results. Write a report, create a presentation or a visual representation of your research to share with your classmates.

New media is always distrusted media.

Professor Janet Murray, Georgia Institute of Technology

NEW MEDIA ARE CONTROVERSIAL

New media technologies have always been controversial. Every development brings fear, distrust and social debate. Most of these concerns are about the concept of reality – audiences are anxious that the relationship between what is 'real' and what they consume in the media is diminishing; that they won't be able to tell what is real and what is not. This fear is not new. In 1896 the Lumière brothers' short film, *The Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat*, premiered in Paris and audiences are said to have run from the cinema. Media commentators worry that **susceptible audiences** will be manipulated and unable to protect themselves from media influence. Interestingly, such commentators rarely consider themselves subject to such influence; a phenomenon called the **third-person effect**. For more on the third-person effect, see Chapter 13.

Commentators are also concerned about the **digital divide**: the contrast between information-rich and information-poor audiences, where not everyone has the same access to technology and information. Issues of personal privacy and safety are also frequently raised as a problem with new media, as has been the issue of cyberbullying. While no-one would question the damage that cyberbullying causes, it does seem illogical to blame the technology, doesn't it?

As a society, we consider some cultural forms more valuable than others. These are usually older arts and entertainment forms such as classical music, art and literature that have, over time, made a major contribution to our cultural and social history. They are often said to have 'stood the test of time' and are thought of as more authoritative and worthy interests for our attention. How often have you been urged to read a book rather than watch TV, play a video game or post on Instagram?

Our trust in traditional communicative forms plays into the controversy about the impact of new media on individuals and society. Books and paintings have a history and therefore a legitimacy that digital media doesn't yet have. New media audiences know that images posted on social media and video games can include some of the most stunning art ever created, but it takes time for this understanding to be accepted by those who have grown up and lived their lives in a different media world.

Audiences and commentators have a tendency to interpret media developments as extensions of what has gone before rather than what is new in terms of communication, the meaning of identity in a digital world and changes in the industrial contexts of production and distribution of content.

Indeed, it may be that the media's role in maintaining social meaning and order has inhibited our grasp of just how significantly the mediascape has changed. We mostly learn about media change through the media itself. Do journalists and commentators understand what it means? How often is coverage of new media phrased as the 'next big thing'? Few individuals or researchers have the time or skills to investigate just how multi-platform multinational media institutions such as Google and Facebook work financially and how they affect culture and society, so they gather information from glossy press releases rather than deep research.

High culture versus popular culture

One ongoing discussion in media studies is around the nature, form and role of **high culture** and **popular culture**. High culture refers to cultural products that are highly esteemed in society, such as the greatest works of artistic merit in fields such as classical music, literature, fine art and dance. High cultural products are considered complex and authentic expressions of the best artists in society. They require effort on the part of audiences to fully understand them. High culture is the culture favoured by highly educated elites in society.

Popular culture (sometimes termed 'low culture' or 'mass culture') refers to the mainstream cultural products consumed by most people, such as popular TV programs, pop music, popular magazines and social media. Popular culture has been thought of as superficial, easy to understand and therefore unsatisfying. Traditionally, it has been looked down on by educated intellectuals as unsatisfying because it is mass-produced, is thought to require less work from audiences to understand its meaning and is therefore of lesser value.

Although they still exist in our homes, classrooms and even in our own thoughts, the boundaries between high and popular culture have diminished in recent years because the distinction between the two has come to be seen as artificial and elitist rather than based on aesthetic or intellectual grounds. Who is to say what is complex and what is not? Could it be that the codes and conventions that structure popular media forms and texts are as complex as those used to create a symphony but different? The skills required to understand classical music are learnt in the same way that we learn how to read TV narratives; it is just that we have practised reading TV much more. For modern academics, there is no competition between high culture and popular culture; they both exist simply as expressions of our society.

THE MYTH OF THE DISAPPEARING BOOK

After years of sales growth, major publishers reported a fall in their e-book sales for the first time this year, introducing new doubts about the potential of e-books in the publishing industry. A Penguin executive even admitted recently that the e-books hype may have driven unwise investment, with the company losing too much confidence in 'the power of the word on the page'.

Yet despite the increasing realization that digital and print can easily coexist in the market, the question of whether the e-book will 'kill' the print book continues to surface. It doesn't matter if the intention is to predict or dismiss this possibility; the potential disappearance of the book does not cease to stimulate our imagination.

Why is this idea so powerful? Why do we continue to question the encounter between e-books and print books in terms of a struggle, even if all evidence points to their peaceful coexistence?

The answers to these questions go beyond e-books and tell us much more

about the mixture of excitement and fear we feel about innovation and change.

In our research, we discuss how the idea of one medium 'killing' another has often followed the unveiling of new technologies.

IT'S ALL HAPPENED BEFORE

Even before the advent of digital technologies, critics have predicted the demise of existing media. After television was invented, many claimed radio would die. But radio ended up surviving by finding new uses; people started listening in cars, during train rides and on factory floors.

The myth of the disappearing book isn't new, either. As early as 1894, there was speculation that the introduction of the phonograph would spell the demise of the books: they'd be replaced by what we today call audiobooks.

This happened again and again. Movies, radio, television, hyperlinks and smartphones – all conspired to destroy print books as a source of culture and entertainment. Some claimed the end of books would result in cultural regression

and decline. Others envisioned utopian digital futures, overstating the advantages of e-books.

It is not by chance that the idea of the death of the book surfaces in moments of technological change. This narrative, in fact, perfectly conveys the mixture of hopes and fears that characterize our deepest reactions to technological change.

NARRATIVES OF TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE

To understand why these reactions are so common, one has to consider that we create emotional bonds with media as they become an integral part of our life. Numerous studies have shown how people develop a close relationship with objects such as books, televisions and computers. Sometimes, we even humanize them, giving a name to our car or shouting at our laptop for not working properly. As a result, the emergence of a new technology – like e-readers – doesn't just indicate economic and social change. It also causes us to adjust our relationship with something that has become an integral part of our day-to-day life.



As a result, we find ourselves longing for what we used to know, but no longer have. And it's why entire industries develop around retro products and older technologies. The spread of the printing press in 15th-century Europe, for example, made people seek out original manuscripts. The shift from silent to sound movie in the 1920s stimulated nostalgia for the older form. The same happened in the shift from analog to digital photography, from vinyls to CDs, or from black-and-white to color television.

Not surprisingly, e-readers stimulated a new appreciation for the material quality of 'old' books – and even for their often unpleasant smell.

The ones who still worry for the disappearance of print books may rest assured: books have endured many technical revolutions, and are in the best position to survive this one.

Yet the myth of the disappearing medium will continue to provide an appealing narrative about both the transformative power of technology and

our aversion to change. In fact, one of the strategies we employ in order to make sense of change is the use of narrative patterns that are available and familiar, such as narratives of death and ending. Easy to remember and to spread, the story of the death of media reflects our excitement for the future, as well as our fear of losing parts of our intimate world – and finally, of ourselves.

<https://theconversation.com/the-myth-of-the-disappearing-book-66717>

Activity 8.8 Understanding the narrative of our relationship with media

Choose one piece of media technology that you love. It could be your phone, gaming console, TV or camera.

Think about why you love this piece of technology. Write about all the things it means to you.

Share your reflections with your classmates. Can you find any common elements? What do the contributions of your classmates tell you about our relationship with media?

Create a poem or a visual essay about your relationship with your favourite media.

Tom Cramond



Technology has fundamentally altered our existence. My aim is to replicate and explore insomnia and the restlessness created by an increasingly connected and 'always on' world. Lit by my laptop and mobile phone and with an exposure time of over one minute, Insomnia is a view inside the often depressing realities of technology.

Tom Cramond

Figure 8.5 *Insomnia* by Tom Cramond, 2010

A BRIEF HISTORY OF MORAL PANICS ABOUT MEDIA EFFECTS

We have all heard the moral panics that sweep the world with each new media technology. Lately they have been about bullying and revenge porn, but did you know that controversy about the influence of the media is much older and has in fact, accompanied every media development? In ancient Greece, Plato warned of the dangers of writing, believing that it would ruin man's capacity for memory.

Prior to the invention of the printing press, knowledge in the Western world was controlled by the church and people communicated orally. Manuscripts were hand-transcribed in Latin by monks. Few people were able to read. In approximately 1453, Johannes Gutenberg invented the printing press, and in 1455 the Gutenberg Bible became the first book ever printed in Europe. Despite opposition from the church, which considered reading a dangerous activity for the masses, the printed word changed the way information and later entertainment was distributed and consumed. Within 50 years, it is estimated that over 9 million books had been printed. For the first time, wealthy individuals could own books and learn to read.

One should be cautious in adopting a new kind of poetry or music, for this endangers the whole system ... lawlessness creeps in there unawares.

Plato, *The Republic*, around 380 BC

English empiricist philosopher John Locke (1632–1704) held the view that:

There is no such thing as innate ideas; there is no such thing as moral precepts; we are born with an empty mind, with a soft tablet – tabula rasa – ready to be writ upon by experimental impressions.

This philosophy had a powerful impact on the way Western societies thought children should be raised and the influences they should be exposed to so that they would not be corrupted by bad experiences – a belief that continues to this day.

By the 19th century, the dangers of reading were described as everything from falling educational standards to a breakdown in communication and conversation in the family. Not only that, but a range of physical ailments – including a susceptibility to colds, headaches, weakening of the eyes, blocking of the bowels and nervous disorders – were attributed to reading. None of these supposed consequences deterred audiences from its pleasures.

During Victorian times, popular weekly magazines called ‘Penny Bloods’ and ‘Penny Dreadfuls’ were avidly consumed by the newly literate working class. They were printed on cheap paper with lurid illustrations and storylines about the sensationalised exploits of highwaymen and the escape and subsequent adventures of young men fleeing cruel employers. Gothic themes and gore blended with stories about the pursuit of good over evil in these popular texts.

Moral panic surrounded Penny Dreadfuls, which were believed to be ‘The literature of rascaldom – a literature which has done much to people our prisons, our reformatories, and our Colonies, with scapegraces and ne-er-do-wells’ (Francis Hitchman, ‘Penny Fiction’, *Quarterly Review*, 1890). It was even claimed that these publications would lead to copycat crimes, and that ‘there is not a boy or a young lad tried at our Courts of Justice whose position there is not more or less due to the effect of unwholesome literature upon his mind’ (Sir Thomas Chambers, the Recorder of the City of London, 1885).

Alamy Stock Photo/Chronicle



Figure 8.6 During Victorian times, popular weekly magazines called Penny Dreadfuls were avidly consumed by the newly literate working class.

Alamy Stock Photo/Pictorial Press Ltd



Figure 8.7 In the early 20th century, concern about the influence of the media centred on propaganda.

In the early 20th century, concern about the influence of the media centred on propaganda, the popular media and broadcasting. Photography became common in newspapers, which, for the first time, were able to reveal images of the devastation of war to those at home. The introduction of radio broadcasting allowed immediate access to news as well as entertainment.

Within decades, moving pictures and then talkies became both new media wonders and the focus of worry about their effects on audiences: where would it all end? By the 1920s, millions of children were



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regularly going to the movies, which raised questions about what effect their regular attendance was having on them; but no evidence was available. Research conducted by the Payne Fund concluded that high levels of movie attendance were associated with declining morals, delinquent behaviour and lower intelligence, and led in part to the Motion Picture Production Code, also known as the Hays Code, which stressed the moral importance of entertainment, and dictated the types of content that was morally acceptable and unacceptable in motion pictures.

The first TV program was broadcast in 1939, and with it the spectre of propaganda again became a focus of concern. After the Second World War, TV became affordable and popular. TV texts such as soap operas were criticised as ‘chewing-gum for the eyes’. These texts were thought to be watched by housewives who at the time were thought to be educationally backward and emotionally and socially deprived.

In the latter part of the 20th century, the concept of addiction to TV and the impact of violent films and pornography became the focus of alarm about the media. The growth of emerging media markets – especially teen movie-goers and children’s TV – meant that debate about the influence of the media on young audiences became a regular feature of current affairs programming. The impact of advertising was and still is a frequent cause for concern, so much so that government inquiries saw some forms of advertising banned. Interestingly, the effect of advertising was rarely discussed in the media itself.

Today, debates about the impact of the media in the form of the internet, mobile phones, computer games, time shifting and social media rage in just the same way as they have for the past 2000 years. **Moral panic** about the media has shifted from violence to privacy, and the health impact of media consumption is now focused on claims about its effect on mental health and obesity. Today we seem to be less concerned about whether the media makes us kill than whether or not it makes us fat as we reach for the remote and another slice of home-delivered pizza. What will be the next moral panic? Stay tuned or check your Twitter feed.

HOW DO THE MEDIA REPORT ON NEW MEDIA TECHNOLOGIES?

There is always a tension between something new and what has gone before. Media industries and commentators are participant stakeholders in the debate about the impact of new media on society and audiences. A **stakeholder** is an organisation, government or individual who has an interest in a debate and has something to win or lose from it. Media stakeholders include traditional media organisations such as newspaper and television companies. The stakeholder interest of these organisations may influence their reporting of media issues. They worry that they may lose **market share** as each new media technology is rolled out. As you have already learnt, they are right to be worried; developments in technologies over recent years have driven significant change in media consumption.

Traditional media are engaged in a battle for our eyeballs. The more viewers or readers they have, the more they can charge for advertising. There are only so many eyeballs in an audience, and if people are playing a game or using social media, they cannot also be reading a newspaper or paying full attention to a television program. Could this be why there is so much negative coverage of new media?

Media **discourses** around the impact of new media usually evoke two possible imagined futures:

- Techno-utopia is a world where technology will connect us all in an empowering, democratic way and all of the world’s problems will be solved through communication and advancing technology. In a techno-utopia, we will be relieved of the boredom of menial jobs because machines will do them for us. This view is evident in the search for the ‘next big thing’ and the gushing press releases about the latest phone, app or device that is claimed to make our lives better. Right now, media coverage of the ‘internet of things’ and the ‘internet of everything’ is typical of the techno-utopian belief that the world will be a better place when everyone is connected online.
- A cyberghetto is a dystopian Big Brother-like vision of the future where everything we do is controlled by machines that are monitored by the rich and powerful multinational organisations controlling the world. Humans will become slaves to technology and forced into a life of poverty and subservience because computer-controlled machines will take all our jobs and control our lives in this dark and depressing future.

It is true that the possibilities afforded by new media are great, but they also come with costs. We must navigate the urge to embrace either techno-utopianism or the dire predictions of cyberghettos. As with all things, the truth of the matter is somewhere in the middle. When you come across media that is particularly positive or negative about new media, ask yourself: Who are the stakeholders and what do they have to win or lose from their point of view?



Figure 8.8 Predictions of the future are often polarised: everyone is smiling and connecting or everyone is dehumanised and alone.

Activity 8.9 New media controversies exposed

Make a list of all the good and bad things that you have heard attributed to new media.

Begin a journal where you record possibilities and problems attributed to media developments.

Collect articles and clippings, and note references from the media itself, such as TV, radio and internet sources.

Make brief notes that analyse the concerns and/or the promotional aspects of each item.

As a class, pool your collection of resources. Can you determine any patterns? Can you make any judgements, based on your sources, about why new media is controversial?

WHAT MAKES DIGITAL AUDIENCES DIFFERENT?

As you discovered in Chapter 1, audiences have traditionally been thought of as consumers of media, and we still are, but with the internet came some significant changes. Today, audiences are also users, gamers, creators, producers and distributors of media content. Audiences have even become products whose usage data is sold to finance the ‘free’ social and other online services they use. The nature and form of audiences has changed because of convergence and computing.

The media has always provided audiences with choice – which newspaper to read, radio station to listen to or film to watch. In recent years, however, the convergence of computers, communication and media has multiplied these choices and afforded immediacy. **Digital distribution** of content means that audiences no longer have to conform to schedules set by media distributors or even record media for later consumption on DVD or PVRs, as has been the case in the last 20 years. As media increasingly moves online, audiences can choose when and where they engage with the media of their choice.

For most of its history, the media has created and distributed media content to a mass audience that could only watch, read or listen to media available in their geographic area. Distribution mostly took the form of:

- circulation – newspapers and magazines
- screening – films
- broadcast – television and radio
- hire – videotapes, DVDs, books and magazines.

If a media text was not distributed in your area, you could not access it and may not even know it existed. Some newspapers and magazines were literally ‘shipped’ in from overseas, arriving months after they were originally published and hopelessly out of date. Film distributors paid for the rights to screen those films they thought would make a profit and, until recently, films took the form of expensive and fragile reels screened by licensed projectionists in cinemas. From the beginning, radio



Figure 8.9 From this to this: newspaper reading has changed.

was mainly a mix of talk, news, music, sport and drama, and television stations broadcast both locally made and overseas content. These distribution models survive today – some readers still have their daily newspaper delivered every morning – but the convergence of media forms and the internet has disrupted traditional distributional models as digital technologies replace them with models that allow audiences to have greater choice in when, where and how they consume their media. It has been argued that we have moved from a mass media culture to a multi-mediated culture where many more aspects of our lives are lived in and with the media.

Reconfiguring the notions of mass media and audience

Gone are the days when audiences simply received and consumed media. Today the acts of consumption and creation have become intertwined. This means we have to radically rethink our understanding of mass media and audience.

Digital media differs from the media that existed before it in that, for the first time, users select the form, timing and content of their media consumption, and interact with the media to alter its content. New media allows anyone who has access to a device that connects to the internet to create and publish their own texts.

The implications of this for all media forms are huge.

THE INTERNET: A CATALYST FOR CHANGE

The internet has changed everything. But theorising a global world is not new. In 1926 Nikola Tesla (after whom the company was named) predicted:

When wireless is perfectly applied the whole earth will be converted into a huge brain, which in fact it is, all things being particles of a real and rhythmic whole. We shall be able to communicate with one another instantly, irrespective of distance. Not only this, but through television and telephony we shall see and hear one another as perfectly as though we were face to face, despite intervening distances of thousands of miles; and the instruments through which we shall be able to do this will be amazingly simple compared with our present telephone. A man will be able to carry one in his vest pocket.

Nearly 50 years later, in 1964, one of the first media theorists, Marshall McLuhan, coined the term ‘global village’. McLuhan believed that ‘Today, after more than a century of electric technology, we have extended our central nervous system itself in a global embrace, abolishing both space and time as far as our planet is concerned.’ McLuhan also said that ‘the medium is the message’, by which he meant that the qualities of a media form have as much effect as the information it transmits.

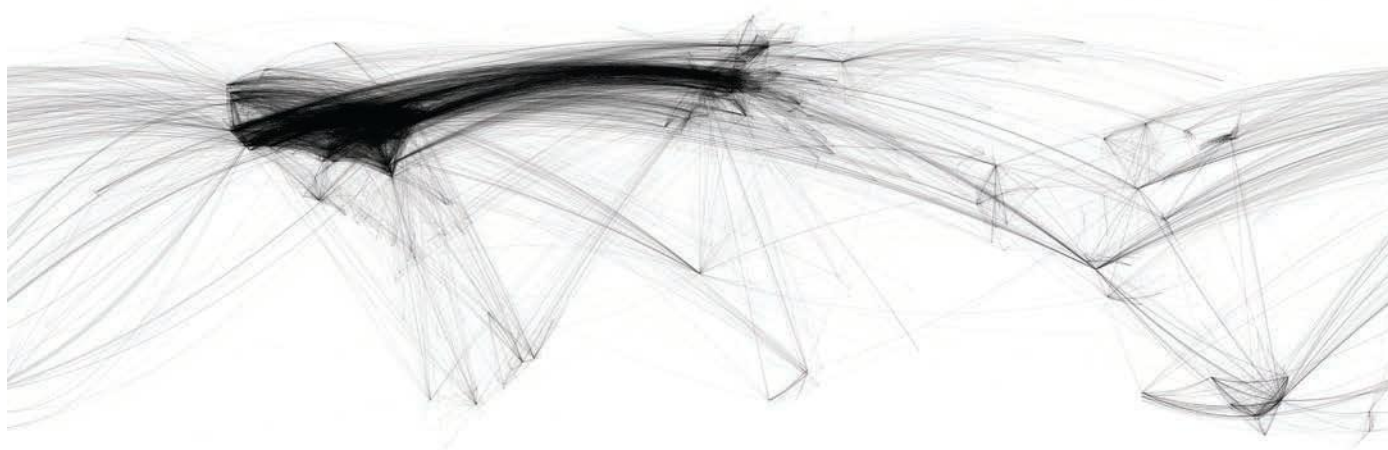


Figure 8.10 The internet

It is fascinating to realise that the future of the media could have been predicted so many years before it was technologically possible, which leads us to consider what we can learn from the patterns of change in the media in the last 50 years.

The internet originated a couple of decades before your birth. During those early years, it was text-based and restricted to interested scientists, engineers and administrators. In 1991 two significant changes heralded the introduction of the internet we know:

- The first was the advent of the **graphical user interface** (GUI), which allowed users to navigate sites using point-and-click graphical elements.
- The second change was in internet policy, which until 1991 had prevented anyone from using the network for personal gain or for anything that did not have a research-related function. The World Wide Web came into existence that year.

Web 1.0

In 1994 Netscape released its first browser, followed by Microsoft's Internet Explorer in 1995. The first iteration of the internet was all about information. Users could search sites, read material, watch videos and fill in forms. Web pages were static; there was no ability to click on images and text to get further information and there was little interactivity, which meant that none of the commenting, reviewing and posting that we take for granted was possible.

Web 2.0

The term 'Web 2.0' came into common use in 2004 to describe a rich internet application where content was dynamic (that is, changing depending on what a user clicked on). User interactivity and social applications became possible. In terms of media, Web 2.0 changed everything. For the first time, users could also become producers of content and they could interact with other users in real time.

Web 2.0 is about doing, not viewing.

Web 3.0

Also called 'the semantic web', the next step will combine user and computer intelligence to deliver content and services tailored to the individual based on every piece of data collected and the way users have interacted with any device connected to the internet. We can see the beginnings of this in sites that recommend content based on your location, demographics and search history and the introduction of AR, **augmented reality**.

Activity 8.10 Metaphorically speaking, the internet has changed our language and culture

A number of words, phrases and ideas that are now in common use have come about or gained new meanings because of the internet. We say we surf the net, google our research, upload a video and photoshop ourselves before saving images in a folder, yet we are not literally doing any of these things – we use metaphors to represent how we understand new media technologies.

- 1 Create a list of digital metaphors.
- 2 Choose one and research the effect it has had on our communication and culture.
- 3 Create a poster or infographic that illustrates this change.

Activity 8.11 The light versus the dark side of the internet

The internet is wonderful but it does have a dark side. It provides opportunities for illegal and immoral activities to those who seek them.

Prepare a paper that argues both for and against the internet as a force for good in the world.

The re-invention of the media affects far more than merely our choices in entertainment or communication; it carries with it the potential for the re-invention of what, and how, we think about our everyday lives as well.

Professor Graeme Turner, University of Queensland, *Re-inventing the Media*

Rethinking audiences

Given that the boundaries between what is media and what is not media are now blurred, it is time to rethink the notion of audience. Today we do not step into and out of the role of media audience as separate from our 'real lives'; the two are continuously interwoven. We can be with our friends physically while using media to chat with other friends online in what University of California media theorist Mimi Ito termed 'virtual copresence'. British media academic Sonia Livingstone calls it the 'mediation of everything'. We no longer simply consume media products, we also create them, and in making media we make meaning, and through this make ourselves and society.

Producers or prosumers?

Everyone who uses the media is a consumer, but we tend not to think about our relationship with the internet as one of consumption. We describe ourselves in terms such as a 'user', 'gamer', 'shopper', 'friend', 'communicator', 'artist' or 'filmmaker'. Futurist Alvin Toffler coined the term 'prosumer' and academic Axel Bruns has used the term 'produser' to describe the new relationship between media audiences and online media. Both terms imply interactivity, consumption, production and professionalism. Prosumers and produsers create and share content, and the terms simply signal that one is about a commercial relationship between the media and its users, while the other emphasises the creative possibilities of the internet for users.

IDENTITY THEN AND NOW

A feature of social media is the growth of online identities. As users we create, curate and maintain our identities online. We project an image of ourselves that represents how we would like the world to see us. This is not new. People have always created and curated their identity. Scientists wear lab coats, teachers carry books and artists have painted 'selfies' since the beginning of time. Frida Kahlo, for example, often painted self-portraits and was also fascinated by mirrors. In the work that hangs at MOMA, *Fulang-Chang and I* (1937), she created a framed mirror to hang alongside her self-portrait so that viewers could insert themselves into the artwork. Kahlo did not know it, but she was creating a metaphor for the relationship between media form, text and audience evident in today's social media.

Online identity

One of society's concerns about digital media is its impact on young users who, because of their youthful inexperience, are considered a susceptible audience. Whether this belief is true or not is a discussion for another time (see Chapter 13) but is expressed powerfully in discussions about young people and social media. For a list of society's concerns about social media, see the Interactive Games and Entertainment Association research on page 216 and the ACMA research 'Like, Post, Share' on the ACMA website.



Teenagers have always created, curated, displayed and changed their identity. It is part of being a teenager. You decorate your room, carefully select and arrange artifacts, including music, make-up, trophies and clothing, to show the world who you are. If you look around your classroom, you will see how each student has created a persona that reflects how they want to be seen, even if they are wearing uniform. No two students wear their uniform exactly the same, and props such as personal grooming, pencil cases, workbooks and stickers on students' computers contribute to the construction of identity.

What is the relationship between our offline and online identities? Both express who we are, but in what ways do they differ? Sociologists believe that there is generally little variance between our online and offline selves, but society perceives a difference because the self is not 'embodied' online. Instead of being physically present, when we are online we are projecting ourselves onto a screen, which some believe is inauthentic, not the real 'you'. But is this true?

Much of the concern about online identity is its public nature. We put ourselves out there in ways that were not possible 15 years ago. Our images, posts, likes and videos build a record of who we are that some **digital immigrants** find disturbing. Information that was once shared in the schoolyard, our bedrooms, in our diary or on the phone is now in our Instagram and Facebook feeds. For **digital natives**, this is normal. Our lives have become media texts, and for some that is TMI (too much information). But is it really a problem?

As you have already discovered in this chapter, throughout media history there has been a tendency to blame each new technology for what are perceived as its negative effects on users. Social media is the latest in a long line of moral panics.

It has been claimed that users create their social media identities through a process of identification with popular culture, including fashion trends and celebrity, which they imitate in order to project a self that is not genuine. This is an oversimplification that demonstrates a lack of understanding of how and why users create and curate their online identity and is disrespectful to social media users who, for the most part, are highly aware of their motivations for constructing their online presence. While it is certain that we do learn, in part, how to be in the world through the media, it is simply not the case that users blindly imitate what they consume. Rather, users engage with the media through a number of mediating screens, including family, education, sociopolitical status and life experience.

Research is now accepting that the internet is not a space to escape everyday life but a space in which we continue to project and live everyday life via new modes and new mediums.

Dr Harry T Dyer, digital sociologist

Online identity is complex and, like anything in life, there is a temptation to look for simple explanations, which in this case is not possible. The structure of social media is commercial; it is designed to maximise audience engagement, and therefore prioritises entertainment over information. There is a disconnect between how users understand its purpose and that of its owners. Users tend to see social media as a service; its owners see it as a business. We will cover this in detail shortly.

Social media is performative. This means that when posting images and sharing online we perform for our audience, our friends and ourselves. We post the version of ourselves that we would like the world to know. This performance varies according to the audience and the reason for posting. In many ways, our posts are like letters to our friends.

Your grandparents wrote letters to share the stories of their life through the process of self-representation. Using the representational codes and conventions of selection, omission, editing and construction to express themselves, they changed their representations according to whom they were writing. Look at your social media feeds to notice how you construct your performative self to suit your audiences. The difference between social media posts and letters is that, unless you use apps such as Messenger, texting or Snapchat to narrow your audience to specific people, everyone can see all of your posts and not everyone will understand the message in the same way because they may be unaware of the context of your post. Have you ever posted something only to receive comments that demonstrate

that some members of your audience do not understand? Perhaps you were playfully posting about being devastated, only to have friends asking if you are all right because they don't know that you were referring to a broken nail.

Activity 8.12 Studying the curated self

Spend some time looking through your social media pages. Make a list of common phrases, images, videos, posts and comments. Now spend some time looking around your room and make notes about what is different and what is similar to your online persona. Reflect on these similarities and differences. To what extent are you the same person online? To what do you attribute the differences?

93% of recruiters are likely to look at a candidate's social profile and 42% have reconsidered a candidate – either positively or negatively – after doing so ...

The Social Index

One feature of social media identity construction is that the material you create and publish is permanent. Today it is common for employers to search for information about a prospective employee. How are your privacy settings? There are even companies that require access to your social media before considering you for a job. Are there things in your feed that you may not want them to see? Would you allow this type of recruitment? Even if you have robust privacy settings, it is possible that employers may find out way too much. No-one wants their employer to have TMI about their youthful hijinks.

Activity 8.13 Do you need to clean up your act?

Look at your social media feeds through the eyes of an employer. Choose one post that could be read in different ways by different audiences. Write a report about how these audiences may read your post.

While you are at it, is there anything in your social media feed that might need editing? Just saying ...



Figure 8.11 Employers may not understand the context of some social media posts.

NETWORKED DATABASE MEDIA PLATFORMS

No discussion of the media and change would be complete without an analysis of the big business behind the internet. As a society, we have come a long way from the golden early days when users were blissfully unaware of how the sites they surfed, and indeed the internet itself, was funded. Who cared? It was all free and the prevailing wisdom was that it was a new community service for everyone to share. We naively imagined it would stay like that forever. Most analyses of digital media have concentrated on the social and emotional benefits and costs of its use, rather than the bigger picture, that sees online media users as part of a wider social, economic and cultural framework.

The key difference between traditional and new media is the networked nature of online **media platforms**. The term 'media platform' once described categories of media content, such as films or newspapers or radio. When these forms began to be connected by computers, the term **networked database media platforms** was born.

Converged and hybridised media platforms are recognisable as the media we love, such as films, TV and news, but they are created, distributed and consumed in a different way. Convergence and hybridisation have disrupted traditional production, distribution and consumption, transforming the media world in the latest of a series of major techno-economic paradigm shifts that began with the Industrial Revolution. Media forms and content are no longer geographically located. Content can be created and shared with anyone anywhere who has access to an internet connection, which is about 40 per cent of the world's population and growing rapidly. Most internet users connect with a mobile

device, usually a smartphone. To see how Australians have changed their media use, follow the link to the infographic on the Department of Education and the Arts website.

Study Figure 8.12. It reveals much about the nature and form of change in developing countries and, at the time of this survey, how the internet was being used across the world. Based on Figure 8.12, can you make predictions about the use of digital technologies at the time you are reading this textbook?

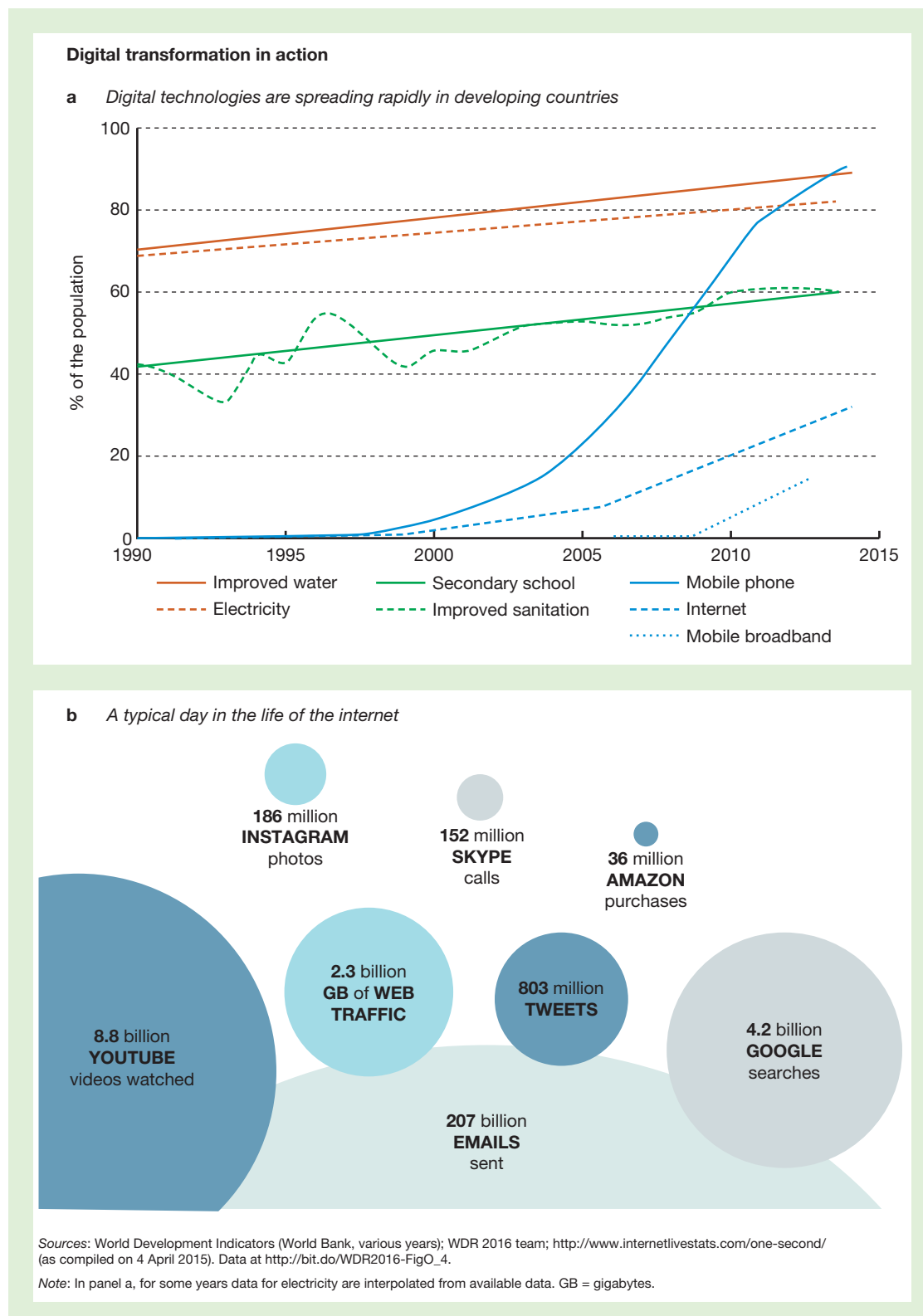


Figure 8.12 The state of the internet in 2016. Source: Digital Dividends Overview, World Bank Group, © 2016 International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank. (CC BY 3.0 IGO)

Several factors have led to the development of the networked database platforms we use today. These include the following:

- Technology: the combination of computing, communications and media content
- Industry: traditional media companies developing online media structures and content and the rise of the digital giants, including Google, Apple and Microsoft
- Social: growth of interactive media, such as Facebook, YouTube and Instagram, and the user-generated content they facilitate
- Text: convergence, hybridisation, remixing and remediation of media texts within and across media forms.

What is a networked database media platform?

Networked database media platforms combine media content with a distribution system and a database of audience use and preferences. YouTube was among the first of these. Its strength lies in delivering content to its users based on their interests and viewing history. If you like cat videos, your recommendations will be filled with funny cats. If you are a gamer, you will likely be among the nearly 50 million subscribers to PewDiePie, who at the time of writing has racked up nearly 14 billion views. Nearly 9 billion YouTube videos are watched worldwide each day. There is something for everyone, and even the most unusual tastes are catered for. Even the search term 'pencils' produces a million videos alone!

Networked database platforms have four functions. They:

- build audiences by providing a service
- match audiences with content through suggestions based on viewing history and usage trackers
- provide communication tools and services for users
- create financial opportunities for both content providers and users.

Media content is expensive to produce. Traditional producers have always relied on the needs and tastes of a mass audience in order to raise the revenue required to create and distribute content. Networked database media platforms also enjoy the financial benefits of a mass audience, something companies such as Sony and Warner Bros. Pictures have cashed in on through the development of their sites, social media pages and digital distribution deals.

For many online producers, the cost of production is small. PewDiePie, for example, makes about \$4 million dollars a year from videos produced in his apartment. Not bad for a gaming university drop-out. However, there are producers of social media content who are not at all interested in monetising their efforts; they are simply happy with a few views and comments from their friends. Many students reading this will be making and sharing content for their own entertainment. Melbourne photographer Mike began his career in this way, sharing his passion for composite photography with his mates. He is now selling his haunting images online through his Instagram page northborders.



Weblink



Michael Giannattilio

Figure 8.13 Mike's work has proved very popular. He is using Instagram to launch his career.

THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A FREE LUNCH

Unless you are paying for an online service I think the presumption is that essentially you are the product. You are surrendering your data in order for businesses to utilise that whether it is for marketing purposes or to sell something.

Dr Emmeline Taylor, ANU

There is an old saying, TANSTAAFL: 'There ain't no such thing as a free lunch.' Today we can safely say that there is no such thing as a free internet site. With a few very rare exceptions, if you are not paying to use a site you can be sure that the site is raising the money it needs to run by collecting and using your data.

NETWORKED DATABASE PLATFORMS ARE ALL ABOUT BIG DATA

User data is the key to the development of and financial success of networked database platforms. It is tracked, collected, analysed and aggregated (combined) with data from other sources to produce 'big data', so-called because of the huge amount of information that can be gained from analysing data collected from millions or, in the case of Facebook or Google, billions of users. Netflix subscribers, for example, consume over 100 million hours of content every day worldwide.

Big data is used in all facets of the construction and maintenance of a networked database platform. It helps companies understand users in order to optimise and personalise content on a site, direct advertising to users, predict the needs and desires of consumers and inform change. Big data analysis allows Netflix to deeply understand the types of content its subscribers enjoy and then fund the production of high-quality programs. The sale of big data to advertisers pays for the operation of the platform. The collection, analysis and communication of data is called 'analytics'. It is very big business.



Figure 8.14 Netflix uses big data.

How is online data collected?

Trackers in the form of cookies work both passively and actively to collect data. Passive collection occurs as users move through an online environment clicking on links, pausing to read or look at something, liking, reacting to or commenting on a page or post. This user data can be used to make a visit to a site more effective or enjoyable for individual users, as is the case for Google searches and YouTube suggestions. For media platforms, information on one user is not particularly useful, but when consolidated with that of thousands or millions of users such data can become very powerful and very valuable, especially when combined with the demographic data gleaned from active collection.

Active collection is the data you choose to share with an app or platform. This includes your age, gender and any information that you and your friends share with sites. Location data tells the platform where you are and where you have been. Data like this enables a service to predict what you might like or want, your education, workplace, shopping habits, musical tastes, political opinions and even your love life. This data is used by sites and apps to create an environment that is designed to keep you on a page longer and to encourage repeat visits. According to websites and apps, this data is, for example, using 'your WhatsApp account information to improve your Facebook ads and products experience' (Source: WhatsApp).

Surveillance capitalism

Surveillance capitalism is a term that has been used to describe the process of data collection, sale and the personalisation of content that most online users are largely unaware of. Surveillance capitalism completely changes the marketplace. Audiences used to make commercial decisions about the media they consumed in a record store, cinema, newsagent or in their lounge room. In those days, media producers could only determine the success of their product through counting how many units – records, newspapers, videotapes, CDs, DVDs or cinema tickets – they sold. Television and radio ratings were collected via paper surveys filled in by consumers.

Today every aspect of audience consumer behaviour online is tracked. Every click and view, how you navigate a site and how long you stay on a page, every comment, conversation and purchase is collected and analysed. This data is very valuable. Follow the weblink to a report on how big data is used by the media.



Weblink

Activity 8.14 Data at work

Take screen captures of the websites you visit most often. Compare these with your classmates and compile lists of the ads and content you share and those that are different.

Conduct some analytics of your own to determine why some content and ads appear on so many classmates' pages while others are unique to individual students.

Create a poster or infographic that demonstrates what you have observed.

AD BLOCKERS AND ANTI-TRACKING ADD-ONS

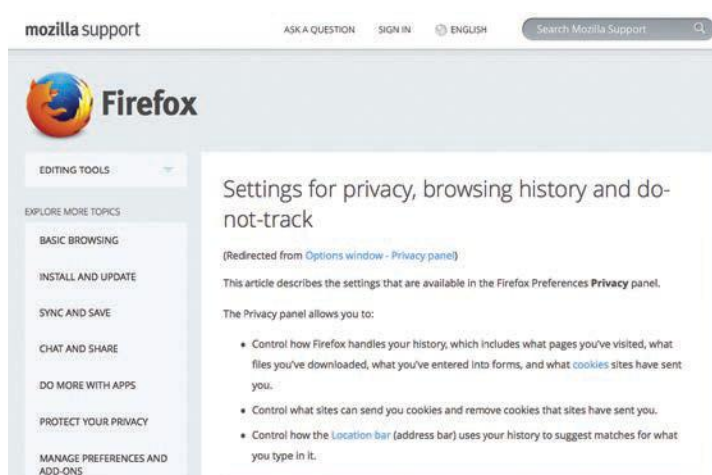
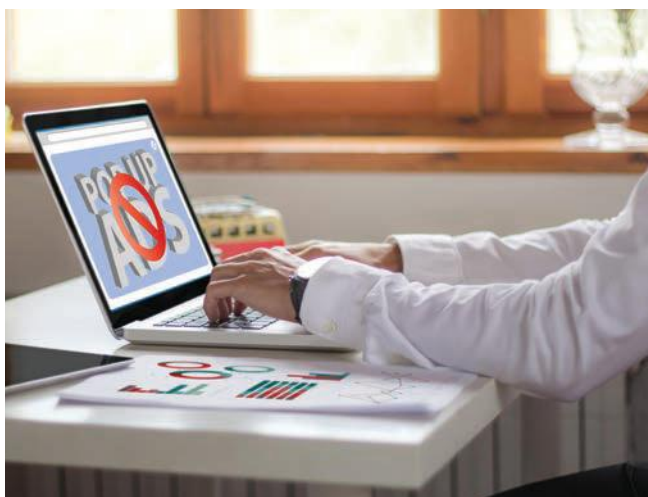
The data collected from internet users is sold to advertising agencies and organisations such as other media companies, manufacturers and even governments. It is estimated that digital advertising is a 100-billion-dollar-a-year market worldwide. But what has this to do with media?

We all know that advertising pays for media content. We are used to seeing ads on TV, at the cinema and in print, where it washes over us like a wave. Sometimes we pay attention to an ad, at other times not. This is because in traditional media ads cannot be targeted in the same way they are online; advertisers in these media forms must take a more scattergun approach.

While ads in the traditional media marketplace are aimed at the predicted audience of a program or readership of a magazine, advertisers can never be sure whether they have reached the right market.

Internet advertising, as you know from your experience, is targeted at you. It is as if the advertiser knows you, because, using all the data they collect, they do. It can even be a bit creepy at times. As we spend more and more time online, advertisers follow our every click, knowing that by collecting enough data on you they can achieve their ultimate goal, your eyeballs. But, unlike traditional media advertising, on the internet you can exert some control over whether you see ads or not and whether your data is collected.

Alamy Stock Photo/Jorge Pérez



Mozilla

Figure 8.15 Some users install ad blockers and anti-tracking add-ons.

Some users install ad blockers or anti-tracking add-ons in their browsers to prevent the collection of data. For users who don't like advertising, ad blockers dramatically improve the user experience, but they will be faced with pleas to unblock or whitelist (make an exception for a site) from websites that rely on advertising for revenue. Ad blockers don't 'block' ads but stop them from being 'served' to the consumer. An ad is served when it is placed on a web page. Advertisers only get paid when an ad is served.

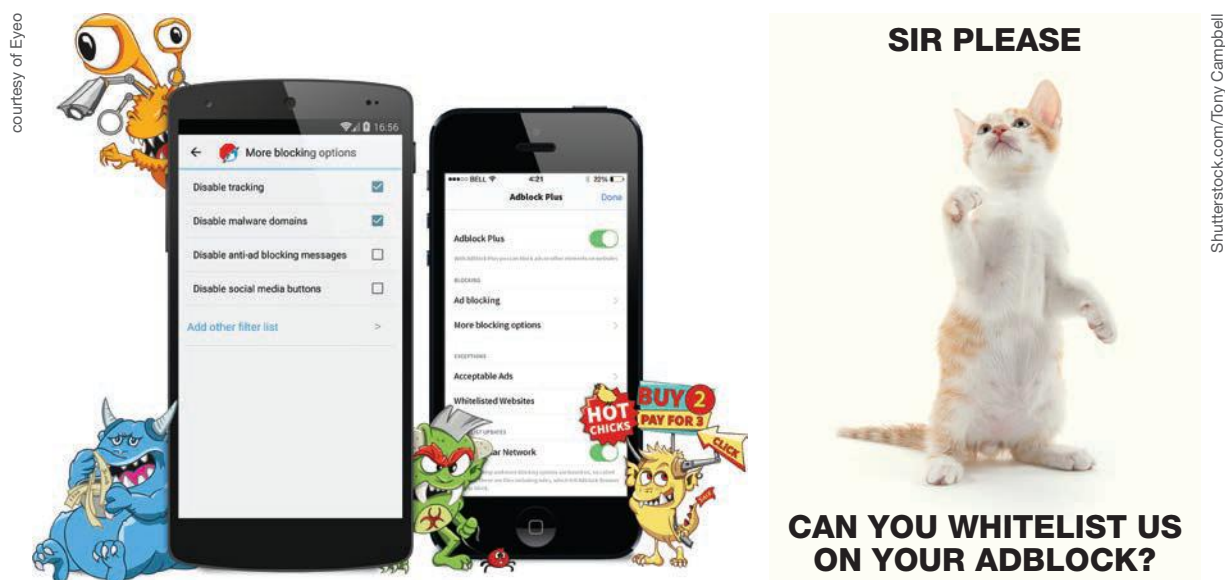


Figure 8.16 Many sites discourage the use of ad blocking and anti-tracking add-ons.

Users install anti-tracking and ad-blocking add-ons for many reasons. Some value their privacy and are worried about when and where the data will be used. Recent data hacks at Sony, LinkedIn, Yahoo and Tumblr demonstrate that our data may not be safe and we should take care to protect our online privacy as much as possible. Most users block ads because they are annoying, take up too much screen space, are poorly targeted or because they slow page loading. Few users consider the financial relationship between users and advertisers; the provision of personal data allows many internet sites to be accessed for 'free'.

Is blocking advertising and tracking ethical? If everyone blocked data collection, most online content would either disappear or become subscription-based and hidden from view behind a **paywall**.

We all agree that the internet is a public good; the world is a better place because of it. Indeed, a recent worldwide research project by UNICEF entitled Children's Rights in the Digital Age puts forward the idea that online access is a human right.

Most children in the world would not be able to afford internet access if not for advertising.

	Advertising 1493 TRACKERS All trackers in category blocked Provides advertising or advertising-related services such as data collection, behavioral analysis or retargeting.	☒
	Site Analytics 466 TRACKERS All trackers in category blocked Collects and analyzes data related to site usage and performance.	☒
	Customer Interaction 217 TRACKERS All trackers in category blocked Includes chat, email messaging, customer support, and other interaction tools.	☒
	Social Media 92 TRACKERS All trackers in category blocked Integrates features related to social media sites.	☒
	Essential 43 TRACKERS All trackers in category blocked Includes tag managers, privacy notices, and technologies that are critical to the functionality of a website.	☒
	Audio/Video Player 41 TRACKERS All trackers in category blocked Enables websites to publish, distribute, and optimize video and audio content.	☒
	Adult Advertising 19 TRACKERS All trackers in category blocked Delivers advertising technology designed specifically for adult content sites.	☒
	Comments 10 TRACKERS All trackers in category blocked Enables comments sections for articles and product reviews.	☒

Figure 8.17 Tracking is big business, but you can block trackers.

Activity 8.15 Life in and outside the media bubble

Ad blockers and anti-tracking apps are free and easily installed. Conduct an experiment to see how using an ad blocker changes your online experience. Install one on your computer but not on your phone. Search the same sites on both devices and note the differences. It may take a few days for the changes in your user experience to become apparent. Create an illustrated report that demonstrates your learning.

Networked database platforms stress the advantages of personalisation, individualisation and customisation, but the link for audiences between these benefits and their cost is less transparent. Before online media, audiences consumed films, broadcast or print media with a clear understanding of the role of advertising in the commercial transaction. The price of consuming media was to be exposed to advertising.

Today, audiences still see advertising, but the content of advertising in online media is targeted to the consumer. You may not see the same content and advertising as your friend. This can be a good thing if, for example, you are not interested in cars but your friend is. Your online history will mean that you will be less likely to be exposed to motoring products.

Surveillance capitalism means that it can be difficult to determine the difference between news, information and sponsored content. Advertising is increasingly formatted to look like content, a phenomenon called **native advertising**. Sometimes native ads are labelled as sponsored content; at other times, they are not. Research shows that online newspaper readers have a particular dislike of native ads. They believe the practice confuses or misleads readers. Nevertheless, native advertising is widely spread across the online world and it may not be possible to tell whether a post on Instagram, for example, is original content or advertising.

A recent study by Stanford University, 'Evaluating Information: the Cornerstone of Civic Online Reasoning', found that 82 per cent of young teens in America could not tell the difference between a real news story and sponsored content. Can you? Have a look at the report on the study, which tests students' skills in the following categories:

- home-page analysis
- evaluating evidence
- claims on social media.

Look through to the tasks. Can you correctly identify which is sponsored content and which is real news?

Activity 8.16 Native advertising

Search your favourite online sites, the ones where you usually go for news and entertainment. Find examples of real news and native advertising and copy them into a document, making sure to remove any telltale giveaways about which is which. Share the documents around the class to see how hard it can be to tell one from the other.

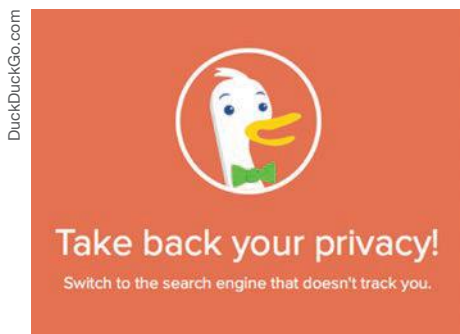


Figure 8.18 There are advantages and disadvantages in being tracked.

Search engines, which we commonly assume to be values-neutral and informative, provide results that blur the lines between entertainment, information and marketing. Most search engines provide results based on your previous search history and display targeted advertising.

One exception is DuckDuckGo, which does not track or share your search history or personal information. This means that your privacy is protected and also that each search is unique, which is both an advantage and a disadvantage. Sometimes it can be a good thing to step out of the search engine **filter bubble** that remembers your history. You are likely to see some different results, but it can also mean that you may not get results that are tailored

to your particular interests. Why not try it? Search for the same term in your usual search engine and in DuckDuckGo and see how the results differ.

Targeted media also means that you have less knowledge of what everyone else is consuming because each user exists in their own media bubble. You are increasingly connected only to those with whom you share common interests, experiences or beliefs. However, targeted content can be



Weblink



Weblink

useful. It is no coincidence that many of you will have seen ads or recommendations in your social media feeds for dresses, formal hire and other products related to your school formal, especially if you have posted about it to your friends or joined a formal Facebook page. You may value this information. Indeed, when writing this very chapter in Google Docs I was invited by Google to check out related research in a pop-up on the page. The experience was scarily prescient. Follow the weblink for more on filter bubbles.



Figure 8.19 This whole textbook could have been written inside the Google bubble. It wasn't.

Activity 8.17 The tracked searcher versus the untracked searcher

Choose a media topic that interests you, that you have searched for before and is relevant to this area of study. Some suggestions include:

- development of social media
- online TV
- new media developments
- how YouTube works.

Search this topic in your favourite search engine. For most of us, this is Google, which tracks your search history so that it can tailor the possible results to deliver suggestions that its algorithms think are useful to you. Now use a search engine that does not track your history, such as DuckDuckGo, to search for the same terms.

What do you notice about the similarities and differences between the results? How has tracking your previous searches influenced your results?

CHANGES IN AUDIENCES MEAN CHANGED MEDIA ECONOMIES: THE AUSTRALIAN EXPERIENCE

The rise of online media has had a significant impact on the revenue of traditional broadcasters and publishers. Until recently, owning a television or radio station or newspaper was very profitable. Once described as a 'licence to print money', television licences were a valuable commodity that delivered advertising into the living rooms of all Australians. Similarly, classified advertising in newspapers was termed their 'rivers of gold'. Today, 'free' internet sites and the rise of social media as a primary news

source have disrupted this financial goldmine. New technologies and the media economy have resulted in calls for changes to the way Australian media is controlled because traditional media organisations are losing revenue. At the time of writing, these changes are before the parliament.

In its submission to a government inquiry into the media in Australia, Network Ten noted that ‘Despite not contributing to the creation of news content, Facebook has recently been described as the most powerful media company the world has ever seen ... Of course Facebook is not covered by Australian media ownership rules.’

The rules that spell out media ownership and control are designed to ensure that no one company or person can dominate the media in Australia and to protect the provision of local content in rural areas. Rules about ownership and control of the media are based on the following principles:

- Australians should have access to a diversity of voices, views and information.
- The communications and media market should be innovative and competitive, while still ensuring outcomes in the interest of the Australian public.
- Australians should have access to Australian content that reflects and contributes to the development of national and cultural identity.
- Australians should have access to news and information of relevance to their local community.
- Communications and media services available to Australians should reflect community standards and the views and expectations of the Australian public.
- Australians should have access to the broadest range of content across platforms and services as possible.
- Service providers should provide the maximum transparency for consumers in how their service is delivered.

Why should I care?

When we think about the media, we usually think about our favourite programs, platforms and texts, not about who owns and funds our enjoyment. We think of ourselves as an audience, not as consumers. Do you give much thought to the control that media proprietors exercise over your media life? Most of us simply click on a site or change the channel without thinking or caring about who owns it, but ownership matters.

We like to think that we are savvy media consumers who can see the truth when we read it, but what if all our news comes from the same source? If you read the *Herald Sun*, *The Australian* or their websites, your news (and a large part of your entertainment) is produced by News Corporation. Are there other opinions? How would you know? Check the News Corp website to see the spread of its offerings.

News Corporation owns 70 per cent of Australia’s newspapers and, while surveys reveal that 58 per cent of Australians believe the government should not allow such domination, this situation is unlikely to change. Media is very expensive to produce and, in these times of media convergence, a risky business in which to invest.

Another feature of our media landscape is that media companies often share ownership of media outlets such as pay TV, and that some media proprietors also own sporting codes and even cinemas. This makes them potentially very powerful.

Despite the rules outlined above, a few very large companies control our media and the trend is to increased concentration of media ownership in fewer and fewer multinational hands. Between 2007 and 2010, Australia lost one-third of its national media diversity. Is this a problem? Why should we care?

MEDIA OWNERSHIP AND CONTROL IN A CONVERGENT WORLD

Australian media is largely controlled under two major pieces of legislation: the *Broadcasting Services Act 1992* and the *Telecommunications Act 1997*. While both have been amended over the years, the framework on which they were written is largely based on traditional media forms and methods of delivery. Today, internet



Weblink

Traditional structure

Based on industry silos



Converged structure

Based on layers

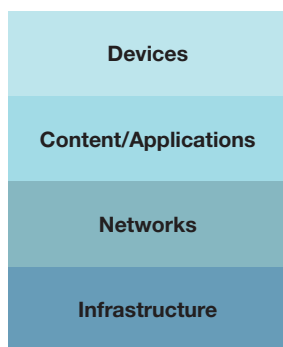


Figure 8.20 Media convergence. Source: Convergence Review – Emerging Issues paper, 2011, Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy. Released under Creative Commons attribution – 3.0.

and mobile devices have come to dominate our media lives and have altered our consumption patterns. Now the same material can reach audiences via multiple media forms and outlets. The impact of media convergence on media audiences and governance is huge.

Our media laws are based on the traditional media model of individual and distinct industries: print, broadcasting, telecommunications and radiocommunications. As the diagram in Figure 8.20 indicates, this model is redundant in a convergent world. To make sense of this diagram, copy it into your workbook and place notes about the media forms and texts you consume under each silo and layer.

In a convergent media world, we can consume media from anywhere we like, which, theoretically, is great for ensuring a diversity of views. But in practice, most people get their news from only a few sources, and the most powerful of these is Facebook.

Facebook's increasing domination of internet advertising and its control over the distribution of news and opinion through its platform has seen it become a news provider. At the same time, advertising revenue for commercial free-to-air television networks in Australia is declining at a rate of about 8 per cent per year. This change means that there is less money available for the production of local news, which leads to a greater reliance on **syndicated news** from Australia and overseas. Have you ever wondered why all the news seems the same? An increasing amount of news comes from agencies that produce and license content for publication across the world.

How do you get your news? Figure 8.21 shows a short Facebook survey that illustrates where teenagers are going for their news. Hint: it's not a newspaper! You may like to conduct this survey yourself among your friends.

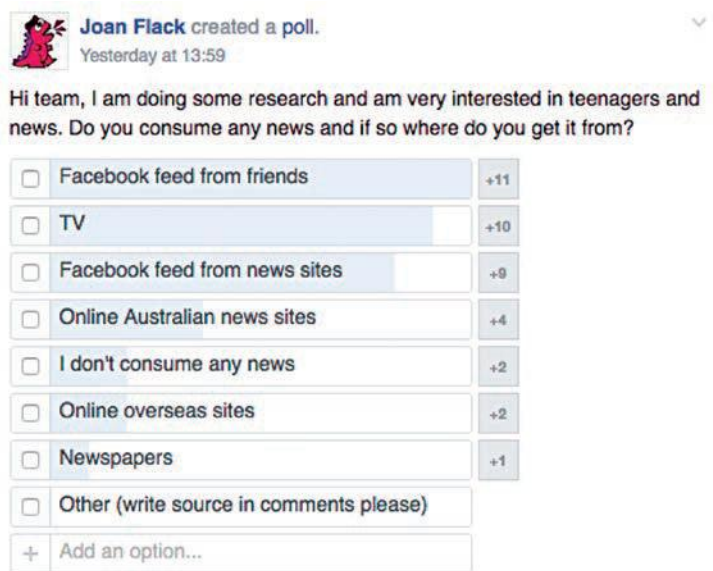


Figure 8.21 It is clear that Facebook is a source of news.

THE NATURE AND FORM OF NEWS IS CHANGING

To counter the impact of online media on television viewership and newspaper readership, traditional media organisations are going digital. They are integrating online sites and mobile media into their distribution networks. These days, we don't just watch or read the news, we can also click through for more coverage or extra features. There has also been a shift in what we think of as news due to celebrityisation, publicity and promotion increasingly dominating the media and forming an integral part of the financial backbone of media production. Celebrities attract audiences.

The speed at which news can reach audiences has increased. Last century, newspapers were published once or twice a day and television news programs were predominantly in the evening. Only radio had hourly news reports. Today, digital technology means that news operates on a 24-hour news cycle. Online news and traditional broadcasters are able to respond quickly to breaking news, but because the news is always available, news organisations have to find more of it to satisfy those tuning in or logging on. This results in a great deal of repetition, especially when there are natural disasters and other major events where news broadcasters switch to rolling (continuous) coverage. The need for more content also results in the publishing of more syndicated news from overseas and in the distribution of stories that once would not have been considered newsworthy.

The nature of news is changing. The role of news has always been to inform, educate and entertain readers. In recent years, much of what we think of as news – that is, information sourced by journalists – is actually the product of press releases. Some commentators put this at up to 80 per cent of news reports. This trend began before digital media but has accelerated with the decline in the number of jobs for journalists and press photographers as readership and viewers declined. Search any newspaper site; it is evident that much of the news has come from press releases rather than journalism.

Clickbait is also part of the changing nature of news. Clickbait is eye-catching online content that encourages the reader to click through to another page. Clickbait appears in most online news sites and social media feeds and can be recognised by headlines such as 'The hot new movie everyone is talking



Weblink



Weblink

about' or 'You won't believe what this rescue dog did next'. *The Atlantic* defined clickbait like this: 'Did this post need to exist, or did you just make a thing for the sake of making a thing?' With clickbait, readers know they shouldn't click but do anyway and always feel a bit ripped off by what they find. For more on the psychology of clickbait, see the *Wired* article 'You'll be outraged how easy it was to get you to click on this headline'.

The **listicle** is a type of journalism that is increasingly common in online publications. Listicles order content in list form. They are easy to write, cheap to produce and popular with readers who appreciate the form because it is quick to read. Listicles often recycle content or are structured as self-help pieces, such as '7 reasons not to get out of bed in the morning' or '5 holiday activities for cash-strapped students'. Listicles and clickbait are often related. For more information on listicles, follow the weblink to the *Guardian* article 'Top nine things you need to know about "listicles"' by Steven Poole.

The rise of celebrity culture has impacted on what we think of as news. Famous people doing stuff is not news – unless it attracts an audience. We all love a good celebrity story, and that is why news is increasingly taken up with stories about the Kardashians or the antics of the rich and famous. News

has become **edutainment**. The more we click, the more news like this will be published. Put a product launch together with an A-list celebrity at the races, invite a journalist and a photographer and suddenly it's news. This type of news is certainly cheaper to produce than investigative journalism and sells just as much advertising space.

Pics or it didn't happen

Celebrity culture has produced a whole industry to support it. Image consultants, media managers, celebrity endorsements and paparazzi work to ensure that images and footage of celebrities are readily available to anyone who wants to pay for them. Images sell. News organisations know that audiences will click on this material and increasingly give the audience what they want. Suddenly a store appearance becomes news.



Figure 8.22 Kris Jenner, Kim and Khloe Kardashian

And then she said ...

Everyone likes a bit of gossip, and what was once largely confined to trashy magazines and entertainment shows has now crept into everyday news programs and even changed the way that serious news is reported. The reason for this is the same as above; gossip stories are readily available and cheaper to produce than traditional journalism.

Gossip, supposition, press conferences ('pressers') and photo ops (opportunities) have become features of political journalism. Politicians and public figures provide story leaks and photo opportunities to news organisations, who send a journalist and camera operator along looking for an angle that differentiates them from other news organisations. So we remember Tony Abbott eating an onion, a story that went viral, but we don't remember why he did it. The news has a 'story' and the politician has publicity; for them, it is a win/win situation. For audiences looking for news? Not so much.

With the digital media divide between journalism and public relations growing ever more porous, what is the future of news? Follow the weblink to listen to the views of ABC journalist Peter Greste on the future of news in the podcast 'What Keeps Me Awake'.



News Limited/Chris Kidd



Weblink

Activity 8.18 What makes news

Think about what makes news. Write a list of the features that you would expect to see in an important news story.

Choose one news source, a newspaper, an online news site or the evening news. Study the top stories. How many of them fit your criteria for important news? How many do you think are based on press releases? How many are advertising disguised as news? How many are not news at all?

Write a news story about the state of the news.

Australian magazines are in decline, but digital engagement is up

In December 2016, the last print edition of *Dolly* magazine hit the newsagents. A fixture in girls' adolescence for over 45 years, *Dolly* magazine sales had been in decline for some time, while its online version had grown in popularity. In an attempt to boost sales, publisher Bauer Media had unsuccessfully tried publishing *Dolly* bimonthly, but in the end decided that *Dolly* was no longer viable in print. This statement from Nick Chan, CEO of Bauer Media, is a perfect demonstration of the changes the internet has wrought on print publishing:

Dolly readers predominantly engage with the brand on digital and social platforms and they do so with greater frequency than is possible with a bi-monthly magazine – this means it's no longer feasible to continue publishing the magazine on a regular basis.

Dolly has played a part in the lives of many Australians over the years, which is why we're delighted its outstanding content continues but now, exclusively, on the channels today's teens prefer to interact with most.



Figure 8.23 *Dolly's* final covers. By releasing three different collector's covers, *Dolly* hoped to boost sales of its final edition.

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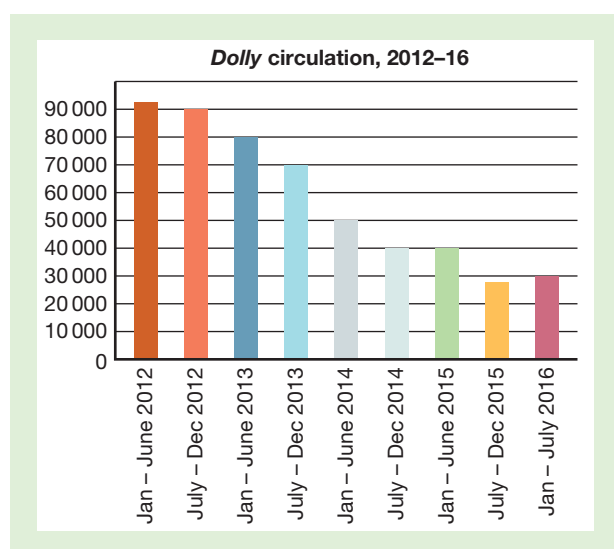


Figure 8.24 *Dolly* circulation data. Source: Audit Bureau of Circulation.

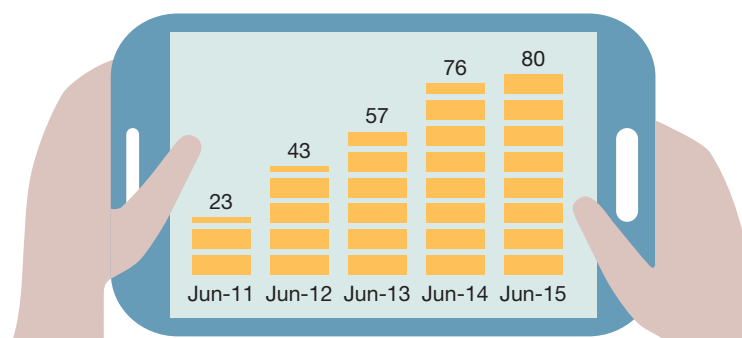


Figure 8.25 Smartphone use among teenagers. Diagram adapted from <http://www.acma.gov.au/theACMA/engage-blogs/engage-blogs/Research-snapshots/Aussie-teens-and-kids-online>, Base: Australians aged 14–17. Source: Roy Morgan Single Source.

By examining *Dolly's* declining **circulation** data and data on smartphone use by teenagers (see Figures 8.24 and 8.25), we can see why *Dolly* decided to go digital only. The pattern is similar across the magazine and newspaper publication industries. Think about the role of *Dolly* in your life. Does this pattern of increasing online engagement and lack of interest in the print edition match your experience? How do you feel now that part of your adolescence is gone? Times are changing – the next generation will be getting their health advice from the *Dolly* Doctor app. If you are feeling nostalgic, have a look at the spread of *Dolly* covers in Figure 8.23.



Dolly is not alone. Magazines including *Cleo*, *Auto Action* and *Top Gear* have also ceased publication. Many magazines are employing a strategy called 'mobile first', which means that content is designed not to look like it would in print, but to engage readers with a dedicated experience designed for mobile phones. Online magazine publishers know that today people read in short bursts when they have a moment and that readers find their content in many different and competing places.

A major difference issue for producers of print and online publications is how to monetise (earn money from) digital readers. In the days of print, readers would pay for the magazine before they could read it. Many readers would browse for a few minutes at the newsagent to see if the magazine was sufficiently engaging to warrant the cover price before buying or subscribing. When they bought the magazine, readers bought the whole package, including advertising and the articles that were not of interest to them.

Clearly, digital publishers cannot ask readers to pay for something they cannot see. Most use a form of digital browsing, allowing readers access to some content before requiring subscription or payment per copy. Some provide basic content for free but charge for premium content; others allow readers access to a limited number of articles per week or month before they hit a paywall that requires payment for further access. Some magazines offer a free experience in exchange for exposure to advertising. New magazines may build an audience, study the usage patterns of readers and then determine the best way to finance their investment. Magazine publishers may not be paying for paper, printing and distribution these days, but magazine production is still an expensive and niche business.

Understanding Facebook feeds, or why I see so many cat videos

With so many users turning to Facebook as their primary source of news, it is important to understand how the news feed works. It is the combination of the data you and your friends have provided, together with an increasingly sophisticated algorithm – a coded set of rules that uses data to decide which personal and trending news you will see.

There are thousands of potential stories that Facebook could show in your feed, but you don't have the time to read them. So, like all news organisations, Facebook has to decide what is the most relevant for you. In the past, this process was termed **agenda setting**. The media set the agenda for the day's news through a process of **gatekeeping**, selecting some news while withholding the rest. These days, your data contributes to Facebook's algorithm to determine what you will see.

Facebook and its users share some aims in terms of the news feed. Both want it to be engaging and relevant. Facebook wants you to stay on the site and to come back often so it can serve you advertising. You want to see items that are of interest to you.

Facebook ranks all possible stories in order of importance to you. It does this by measuring your engagement with material that has come into your feed and that of your friends. The more often you have liked, commented on, shared, clicked or spent time reading (yes, they measure this) stories in an area of interest, the higher up the ranking a new story is placed. Factors that influence the stories you see include the following:

- Who posted it: you see material from the people or pages you have interacted with the most.
- When it was posted: recent stories are prioritised over older stories.
- The type of content: you will see more of the types of content, such as status updates, images and videos, that you have interacted with.
- Interactions with the post: if other people have interacted with a post, you are more likely to see it.
- How many others have posted the same thing: Facebook will tell you how many people have shared the same content.
- New Facebook products: to encourage you to engage with the site in new ways.

Facebook allows some control over your feed. You can save, hide, unfollow, report or turn on notifications for posts, so if you get tired of cat videos, you can see fewer of them. However, the nature of the news-feed algorithms means that if you and your friends continue to click and like particular content, you will get more of that content. You are rewarded with videos and posts about the same things. This Facebook filter bubble means that you are unlikely to see content that does not fit your particular social or political preferences, so you will not be exposed to views that are different from your own. This can be cosy and reassuring, but it can also mean that you will not see new ideas and that your views and values will not be challenged. This may also be the case if you read the same newspaper or watch the same news broadcast every day, but offline our friends don't 'like' or repost, so we don't get reinforcing feedback for our engagement.

Algorithms and news: the bigger picture

Facebook never accounts for its algorithms. There is no transparency when it comes to how its controversial 'trending topics' are decided, despite denials these are skewed towards liberal point of view stories.

Garry Linnell, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 November 2016

Audiences increasingly source their news online and from social media. Media students should ask the hard questions about this phenomenon. What are the implications for readers and society? How can users judge the veracity (truth) of the news delivered to them that has been selected in part through the use of algorithms that analyse data to deliver what the site determines as news? How much of your news feed is news? Why does Facebook put news into your feed? What would your feed look like without news content?

Read this article from *The Conversation* to see how you can deal with your news bubble. The entire article can be found online.

NEWS AS INFORMATION AND IDENTITY

More and more of us get our news primarily from social media and use that same social media to discuss the news.

Social media takes our natural tendencies to associate with similar minded people and seek information that confirms and

amplifies our convictions. Dan Kahan, professor of law and psychology at Yale, describes each of us switching between two modes of information processing – identity affirming and truth seeking. The result is that for issues that, for whatever

reasons, become associated with a group identity, even the most informed or well educated can believe radically different things because believing those things is tied up with signalling group identity more than a pursuit of evidence.

The Conversation, <https://theconversation.com/how-to-check-if-youre-in-a-news-echo-chamber-and-what-to-do-about-it-69999>, Creative Commons licence



Weblink

Activity 8.19 What does your feed look like without news?

Go through your Facebook feed and categorise the content into news and not news. What types of stories are news and what does your feed look like without news? Does this reveal anything about why Facebook inserts news into your feed? Write an analysis of your findings and then compare your report with those of your classmates. Are there any common threads?

Fake news

The content of your social media feeds is controlled by computers, and sometimes computers can get it wrong. Originally, media platforms employed human news editors to oversee the results their algorithms suggested, but as their computer programs became increasingly sophisticated, and the numbers of users on their sites and the sheer amount of news continued to dramatically increase, companies such as Facebook and Google have relied more and more on algorithms to select and publish news. This practice also addressed the accusations of some commentators that social media was guilty of agenda setting and human political bias in the topics selected for publication.

Fake news is a bad label; it is really propaganda, fraud or lies, and it has generally economic or political motivation.

Professor Jeff Jarvis, City University of New York

One result of relying on machine intelligence is that fake news may find its way into social media news feeds. Fake content can range from hoaxes, unsubstantiated urban legends and photoshopped weird animals to much more sinister personal attacks or political content designed to alter people's voting intentions, as was the accusation in the 2016 US presidential election. It can be very difficult to tell what is true and what is not true online. Barack Obama, former president of the United States, has said that new media has created a world where 'everything is true and nothing is true'. While there are



Weblink

plenty of fact-checking sites, most users don't bother. We are much more likely to believe something that comes into our feed from our most trusted source, our friends.

It is worth remembering that fake news and hoaxes are not new. Indeed, one of the most famous media hoaxes of all time, the infamous 1938 *The War of the Worlds* radio broadcast, saw some listeners believe that the world was being invaded by Martians. Like fake news today, this radio broadcast played into the fears of its audience. For more, see page 346.

Fake news has become big news, but how does it work? Fake news sites get their revenue in exactly the same way as legitimate sites, through advertising. The more visitors a site can get, the more advertising they can serve. Their content is designed to be controversial clickbait that appeals to readers. As fake content is shared, it can become very popular and sites like Google and Facebook's algorithms pick it up as a trending topic, including it in search results or our news feed.

Because online material is digitally distributed, it can be difficult to track its source to determine whether it is truthful and accurate. Pete Brown, research fellow at Oxford University, has compiled some handy free online resources that you can use in his listicle 'Six easy ways to tell if that viral story is a hoax'.

Legitimate sites are in a constant battle with fake news sites, which find ways to distribute content and make money, while legitimate sites must employ increasingly sophisticated computer programming to detect fake news. This problem is not going to go away any time soon. There is too much money to be made. As consumers, we need to ask ourselves the following of every piece of information that comes into our feed:

- Who created it and why?
- Who are the stakeholders and what do they stand to win or lose?
- How can I verify the truth?
- Is it worth reposting or not?

By asking these simple questions, we can do our part to ensure that we do not get sucked in. We don't want to live in what has been termed a 'post-truth world'.

If we are not serious about facts and what's true and what's not, and particularly in an age of social media when so many people are getting their information in sound bites and off their phones, if we can't discriminate between serious arguments and propaganda, then we have problems.

Barack Obama, 8 November 2016

Activity 8.20 Read all about it

Choose a news item that has come into your Facebook feed in the last few days. Find the same story in print and online newspapers and use a search engine to see if you can find it in other sources. You may be able to trace the story back to its original publication.

Lay all the versions you can find out next to each other and read them carefully. Place each version in order of publication. You will use this ordering to determine whether news that appears on your Facebook news feed represents the news differently from other news sources.

Look for exact matches in phrases and for subtle differences in the way the news has been constructed in each version. If there are images, compare these. Highlight similarities and differences.

Are there variations in the facts or in the ways the facts have been constructed into stories in each version? If so, how are these differences constructed and why do you think this is the case?

If all versions are the same, why do you think this is the case? It could be that they were originally published by a **news agency** such as Reuters or Associated Press. If you are not sure what a news agency is, try looking it up in Wikipedia.

Share your research with your classmates. Pool your responses to find patterns in the types of news that appear most commonly in the Facebook news feeds of teenagers in your demographic.

GOOGLE, THE GAME CHANGER

What was life like before Google? How did people find out stuff? Ask your parents and grandparents about life before we 'googled it'. Just as Facebook introduced the concept of social media, Google has changed the way the world gathers information, introducing what has been termed the 'culture of search'.

We tend to think of Google as a handy tool for finding information, and it is. The search is the most common activity on the internet. But Google is not without an inherent bias necessarily built into its very structure. For any search there can be millions of results. Users are not going to trawl through all

of them. Most of us look only at the top results, but how are they selected and on what basis are they ordered? Google will never release the details of its algorithms, but looking at the results for any search some features are clear.

Google's algorithms rely on more than 200 unique signals or 'clues' that make it possible to guess what you might really be looking for. These signals include things like the terms on websites, the freshness of content, your region and PageRank.

Google



Shutterstock.com/chaos

Figure 8.26 Searching before Google

Fun fact: the term 'PageRank' is named after one of Google's founders, Larry Page. True.

To rank search results, Google begins with those that are paid advertisements, then the PageRank is, generally speaking, determined by your search history and the page popularity. This means that each search tends to favour ways of thinking that

are more popular over new or alternative ones. That is why we so often get the results we expect and are rarely challenged or extended.

There are positive and negative aspects to Google's algorithms. On the plus side, users don't have to wade through unwanted results to find information. On the negative side, they are not exposed to new ways of thinking about a topic; and the more they search, the more they become trapped in their own particular Google filter bubble. This comfort is reinforced by the structure of the results page, which conveys a sense of authority in the results. Users trust Google, and for the most part they should, as long as they are aware that Google favours Adwords (paid keywords) and that many websites manipulate or 'optimise' their pages to ensure that they appear towards the top of the results. Users should always remember that these results are not 'the' results but a 'selection' of results.

Activity 8.21 What can you find out about Google?

Search Google and several other search engines, including DuckDuckGo, for the term 'google'. See how many of the results are the same and how many are different in the first 20 results. What does this tell you about how search engines work?

Now use these search engines to find out something really interesting to share with your class about Google. Create a class poster of results.

HAVE AUDIENCES SIMPLY BECOME CONSUMERS?

The traditional business model of creating and distributing products to a mass audience has been adapted and supplemented by one where specific smaller market groups can be tracked and targeted with content and advertising specific to them. These audiences are identified by their consumption, which is tracked and recorded. The data is then sold to media producers.

Activity 8.22 Market segmentation and you

Log on to your favourite media sites and take screen captures of all of the ads you see in a defined period; for example, four hours. Analyse your data. What products and services appear?

Now share your data with your classmates. What similarities and differences are there?

Create a visual representation of your findings.

MEDIA AND CULTURE: IT'S ALL ABOUT MOBILE

In 2014 internet access from mobile devices overtook access from computers worldwide, with the trend showing no signs of slowing. This is due to increased access to smartphones in developing countries. At that time in Australia, a total of 21 per cent of adults accessed the internet from phones exclusively, with young adults most likely to be exclusive mobile users.

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) conducts research into the use of the internet and phones by Australians.

Its 2016 report *Aussie teens and kids online* revealed the growth of mobile use by young people. In 2015, while teenagers accessed the internet from a range of devices, 80 per cent used a smartphone.

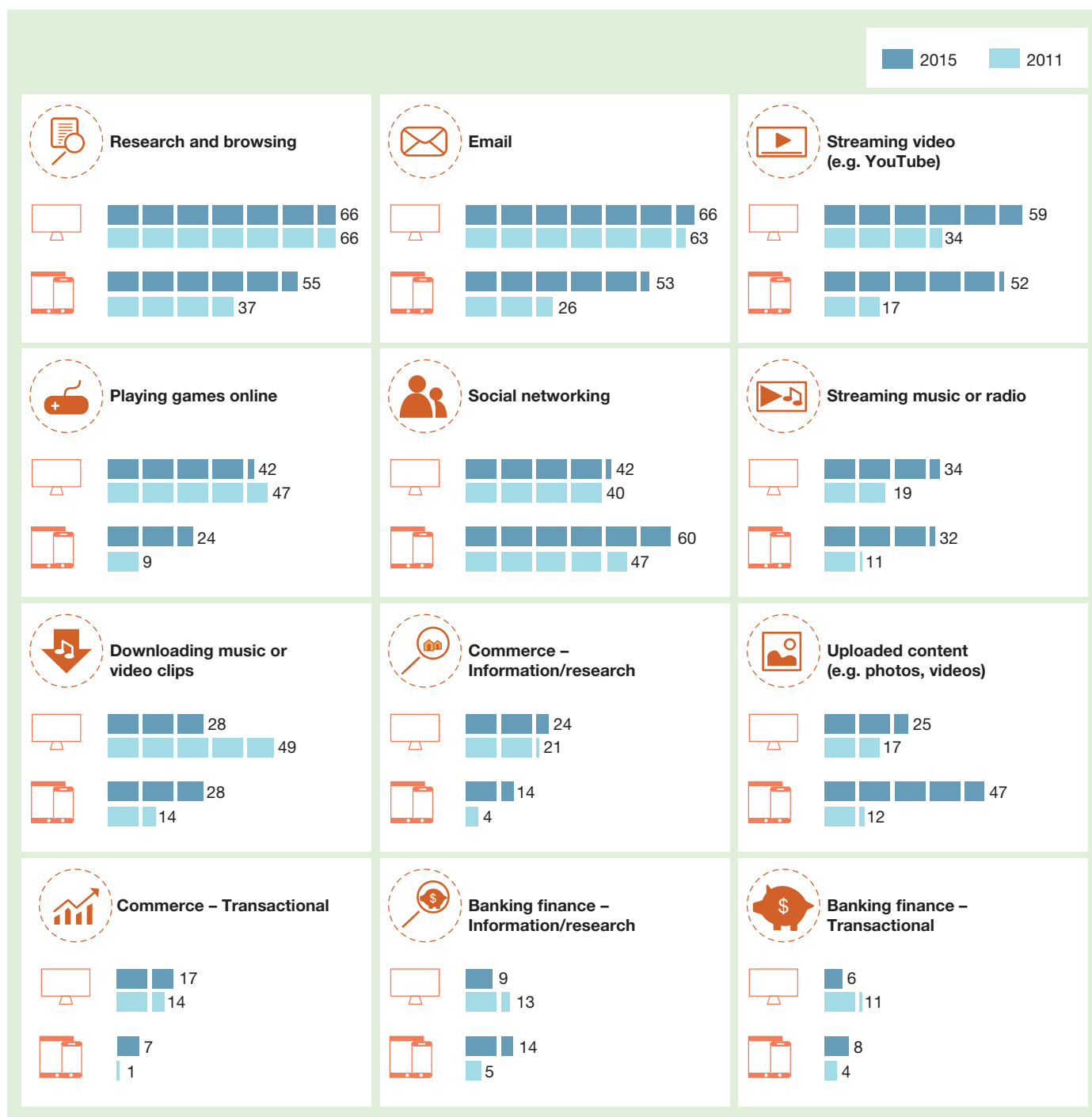


Figure 8.27 Teens' use of computers and wireless devices for online activities. Diagram: ACMA, <http://www.acma.gov.au/theACMA/engage-blogs/engage-blogs/Research-snapshots/Aussie-teens-and-kids-online>. Base: People aged 14–17 who have undertaken at least one activity online via each type of device in the last four weeks at June. Source: Roy Morgan Single Source. © Commonwealth of Australia (Australian Communications and Media Authority) 2014. (CC BY 3.0)

Activity 8.23 The rise of the mobile

Analyse the data in Figure 8.27 to determine trends in the ways young people accessed the internet between the years 2011 and 2015.

- 1 Which activities were more commonly conducted by computer in each year?
 - 2 Which activities were more commonly conducted by smartphone?
 - 3 Which activities showed the most dramatic change and which hardly changed at all?
- Use the data above and more recent data published by the ACMA to make some predictions about how young people will use mobile technologies in 2020.
- Create an infographic that illustrates your learning.

GOING VIRAL: SPREADABLE AND STICKABLE MEDIA

It can be challenging making sense of media developments and change; **communication theories** can help. They are created by researchers and academics to explain how communication between the media and its audiences works. Spreadable and stickable media is one such theory. It was devised by Professor Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford and Joshua Green and published in 2013 in their book *Spreadable Media*.

This theory builds on a long history of theories, including the multistep flow model, the uses and gratifications theory and the ideavirus, which you can read about in Chapter 13. It explains the relationship between media and audiences in an online world where media content is created and circulated by both media organisations and individuals. Jenkins explains why users share media and why some messages stick while others don't.

Spreadable media is based on the idea that people share content that engages them. Engagement can come in the form of amusement, learning, or enjoying content that fits our views and values or that we think our friends will like. The theory says that users get pleasure from sending and receiving content, including images, videos, news, political, personal and social posts that they think will engage their audience (online friends). Positive appraisal in the form of likes, comments or reposts is a form of relationship building.

Stickable media is successful media. If the message sticks with those who see it, they are more likely to share it. Media sticks if it engages. Engagement is everything. Jenkins argues that if it doesn't spread, it's dead.

Spreadable and stickable media can be used to explain sharing between online friends and fan groups but is also valuable to companies such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Snapchat, which use online media to build brands and market goods. Companies such as Nike and Doritos use the principles of spreadable and stickable media to build a profile among potential customers by posting engaging content and encouraging user-generated posts on Instagram.

Celebrities such as Kim Kardashian and Selena Gomez are what is termed 'social influencers'. They are employed as brand ambassadors to casually post about the products they use in order to build a relationship between the product and their followers on social media. Check out the sites, organisations or celebrities you 'like' or 'follow' to see how spreadable and stickable media works. Hashtag marketing, where companies post beautifully composed, yet casual, images of their products and allow followers to post their own images or videos, builds a stickable and spreadable relationship between brands and their market, who contribute to the brand's culture by participating in it. For more on the issues of **social media influencers**, see Chapter 13.

Spreadable and stickable media can only occur today because of the communicative possibilities of the internet. Networked database technologies have allowed people to connect in ways that were not possible 15 years ago. User information is tracked, used and sold to create opportunities for new relationships, both personal and commercial.

Sharing content is often described as 'viral' media, but the term 'virus' has negative connotations. No-one wants to contract a virus or be responsible for sharing one. Spreadable and stickable media goes further. It explains how our engagement with and sharing of content is not viral but a result of our active choice to build relationships and be part of a participatory culture.

IT'S ALL ABOUT SOCIAL

There is no doubt that the focus of media is audience engagement and that the ability to customise our media experiences is appealing. Most networked media platforms rely on the social engagement designed into their structures. Much of this social engagement is genuine – we all like checking in with our friends – but it occurs in an engineered and highly controlled technological environment.

Audiences choose media to suit their personal and emotional needs. This is most evident in the choices we make about which social media platforms and technologies we use. Try it for yourself.

Activity 8.24 One size does not fit all: social media choices

As a class, list all of the social media forms and technologies you can think of. Create a survey that asks every class member which ones they use and why. Get your survey participants to rate each one from 1 to 5 in terms of how much they enjoy using it. Think carefully about how you can structure your survey questions to get the most informative responses.

Duplicate this survey, add non-identifying demographic questions, such as age and occupation, and distribute it to the families of class members. Compare the results by age. What social media sites are most popular among all ages, which ones are used by teenagers and which by older people? What do their answers to the questions about why they choose some forms tell you?

Create an infographic that illustrates your results.

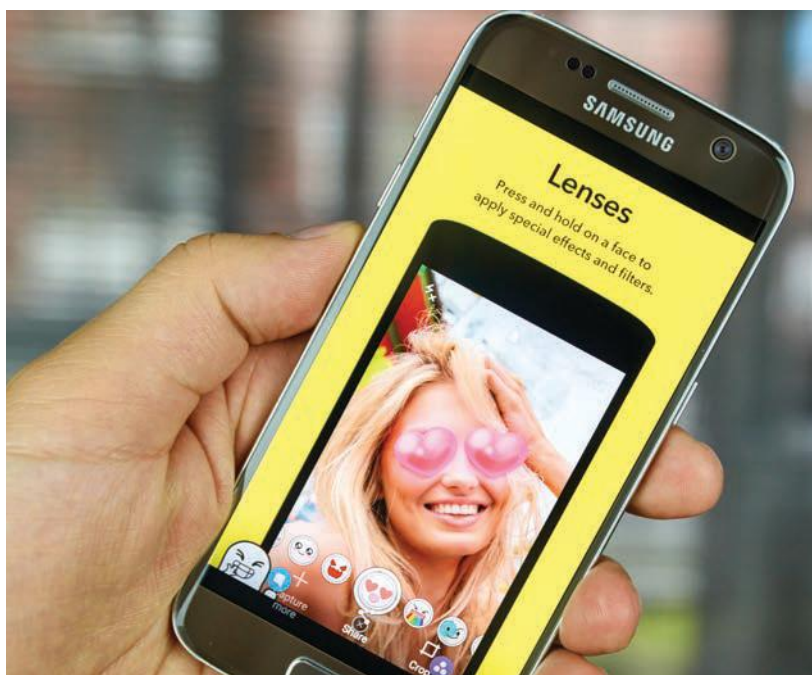


Figure 8.28 Snapchat, the latest distrusted media form

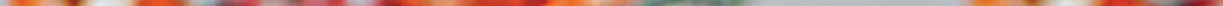
Snap

In 2016 Snapchat overtook Twitter in terms of users. Between 2015 and 2016, the number of videos shared on Snapchat increased 350 per cent to more than 10 billion every day. An interesting development in the social media world, the app has been embraced by younger users who enjoy the fact that snaps are not permanent and therefore they can, if they choose, communicate in an authentic and informal way that encourages instant and personal engagement. According to *Technology Review*, 'The fleeting nature of the content is much closer to an in-person conversation, and the self-destruct feature drops inhibitions and creates a feeling of urgency that demands attention, but also elicits less consideration of impact and fear of consequences.'

The impermanence of snaps is precisely why it has become the latest distrusted media technology among non-users, because they cannot see or track much of its content.

Snapchat's creators claim that the app was an attempt to overcome the very structured environment of many social media platforms through providing a way for users to chat spontaneously without having to think about the permanency in their interchanges or consciously curating their online identity. Not everyone wants their entire online life permanently recorded, nor do they want to gather likes and comments for every online interaction.

Snapchat has changed the way its users interact online. Cornell University research revealed that Snapchat friends are closer than Facebook friends, who tend to be more casual acquaintances. Users reported that they like not having to think about how all of their friends might interpret a message before they post and that they can say things to close friends knowing how they are likely to interpret the message. They are more inclined to think of these interactions as sharing rather than showing information. Snapchat users are highly aware of the dangers of online sharing and value their privacy.



Activity 8.25 Snapchat, Instagram or Facebook – which is better?

Each social media form has advantages and disadvantages for users and for society. As a class, create a list of advantages and disadvantages for Snapchat, Instagram and Facebook. Conduct some online research to see whether your points are opinion or based in fact.

Write a report or create a Snapchat or Instagram story that illustrates your findings.

Living a surveillance life

In 2016 an Austrian teenager sued her parents for posting images of her on social media, claiming that since 2009 they had ‘made her life a misery’ by posting pictures of her having her nappy changed and being potty trained. Her lawyer claimed that her parents violated her right to a personal life. In the same year, France enacted a law that made it possible for children to take their parents to court for breaching their privacy or endangering their security online. What do you think? Has social media meant the end of privacy? Have you ever exploited the privacy of someone or has your privacy been breached online?

The Arts Law Centre of Australia has published several documents on the laws regarding your rights in relation to the unauthorised publication of your image, protecting your work online and on the rights of street photographers. These are useful resources for Media students.

Activity 8.26 Social media, empowerment or exploitation?

Conduct a class debate about whether social media empowers or exploits users.

COPYRIGHT, THEFT AND ETHICS

One feature of digital media is the ability to copy and share media products, both legally and illegally. There would be very few, if any, students in your class who have not watched, listened to, copied or published media products or online material that they do not own the rights to. It is so easy to torrent or copy films, songs or images and to use and share them, and it seems that everyone has a good reason for doing so. But is this behaviour the right thing to do? What are the laws and how do we navigate the ethical minefield that is copyright?

Intellectual property and copyright

Intellectual property is the property that results from original creative thought. Creations of the mind include films, art works, music, books, written text, designs, symbols, images, apps or software. Productive new ideas you create are your intellectual property.

Copyright is a type of property that is founded on a person's creative skill and labour. Copyright protects the form or way an idea or information is expressed, not the idea or information itself.

Copyright is not the ownership of a thing but the right to do something with an original work, such as a piece of writing, a song, a design or a piece of art. The copyright owner is the creator of this work and has the right to copy, publish, perform or distribute the work or to authorise others to do so. The work is their intellectual property because they created or invented it. Copyright protects the owner from theft of their intellectual property and gives them the right to earn money from it.

Copyright is divided into two types of rights: economic rights and moral rights. Economic rights allow the copyright owner to sell, hire or otherwise distribute their work and to charge for this if they wish. Moral rights mean that the ownership of the work must always be attributed to the owner.

Let's take this text book as an example. You may have bought the book you are reading right now, but you do not own the words and images that it contains; you have simply purchased the right to read or do whatever you wish to it. As the author, I do not own all the ideas contained in this book, only the ways these ideas are expressed. I do own the copyright to all of the text and images that I have created, and because you have purchased the book I grant you the right to read it. The publisher of this book has sought copyright clearance for every piece of text or image that has not been created by me. Some of these have been freely given, others have been paid for. Every one of them has been acknowledged. Because this is a book about the media, there are more images than would normally appear in a textbook and many of the owners of these images have demanded a fee to use them. This is fair enough; everyone has the right to make money from their creativity and hard work. The costs associated with obtaining permissions for this book are a substantial amount for the publisher.

Copyright laws vary from country to country. In Australia, the *Copyright Act 1968* is designed to protect the rights of those people who create original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic works. The work must be made by a resident or citizen of Australia, or be made or first published in Australia, or have a specified connection with a country that is a member of a relevant international copyright treaty. Works do not have to be published or in the public domain to be copyright. Copyright lasts for 70 years after the death of the creator of the work. Copyright is complex; the Copyright Act is 768 pages long. If you are interested in reading it, see the links below.

How do you copyright something?

Everyone who creates intellectual property owns the copyright. You own the original work you create. You do not need to do anything special to copyright your work, but if you want to you can attach a copyright notice to any of your original creations. There is no set form of words, but you could use the following as suggested by the Attorney-General's Department:

This work is copyright. Apart from any use permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, no part may be reproduced by any process, nor may any other exclusive right be exercised, without the permission of [name and address of copyright owner and the year in which the work was made].

You could also use the standard copyright statement found in the credits of films or in the beginning of books.

For more on copyright in Australia, there are some excellent resources available:

- *A Short Guide to Copyright* published by the Attorney-General's Department of Australia
- The *Copyright Act 1968*
- 'Copyright Information Sheet' by the Arts Law Council of Australia
- The Copyright Council, an independent organisation promoting the benefits of copyright.

Activity 8.27 Looking at the law

Choose one of the sites above and cruise through it to find interesting facts about copyright that you did not know.

Create a listicle entitled 'Five things students need to know about copyright'.

Copyright is controversial

While the laws are well known and everyone remembers the 'You wouldn't steal a handbag' ad, copyright remains a controversial topic. Young people are the highest violators of copyright law, mainly through downloading and sharing films, television programs and music, but many adults do it too. They are aware that what they are doing is illegal but continue to do so. What are the moral and ethical issues with copyright and why are we so blasé about stealing media content?

Although the laws are clear and copyright theft can result in a hefty fine, in our day-to-day lives there appear to be few consequences for the actions of perpetrators, and digital technologies make it easy to copy and share online material. Everyone has their personal justification for copyright infringement, but how do these stand up under examination?



Weblink

Creative Content Australia is an organisation funded by media producers and distributors with the aim of raising awareness about the value of copyright. It conducts research and produces consumer awareness and educational resources 'to better inform the debate, dispel myths and motivate changes in behaviour'.



What are the arguments for copyright?

- Everyone who creates something should be able to control when and where that thing is used.
- Creators should be acknowledged and paid for the use of their material if someone else is making money from it.
- Legal protection encourages the creation of media products.
- Copyright protects the common good in society.
- Copyright is a moral right.
- If someone uses copyright material and changes it without the permission of the owner, the meaning may change and the audience may think that the original creator is responsible.
- When a media product such as a film, TV show, image or article is used without payment, everyone who works in the industry suffers because that product will lose sales and this may mean that the producer cannot afford to make another product. All of the cast and crew suffer. Cinemas and retail shops miss out on sales, which impacts their business.
- Paying for content creates a creative economy.
- Downloading sites are high risk, using them may be illegal and also lead to malware being installed on your computer.

What are the arguments against copyright?

- Artists have always copied and appropriated from what has come before. Why is it different now?
- Everyone is doing it. It is just sharing.
- It is all over the internet.
- Copyright is a concept that is no longer relevant. It is a product of analogue media where producers created work individually rather than collaboratively.
- They copy stuff in China. Why can't I?
- Media organisations are huge and they make millions of dollars. I am a poor student.
- No-one is going to see my film. Why should I use copyright-free music?
- I need to use a particular image or logo because my work will look more authentic, just like a real film, magazine, newspaper or web page.
- I was thinking about this piece of music while I was designing and producing my video. It is based on the piece and if I don't use it my work will not be how I envisaged it.
- I make mashups. I just use little bits from lots of sources. Nobody cares about that.

Activity 8.28 Argue your case

Randomly distribute one item from the lists above to each member of the class.

Research the argument you have been given and write a one-page report on your findings.

Compile the class research into a booklet for everyone to read, then hold a discussion about what you have learnt.

What are the alternatives to using copyright material?

- Seek material that has been released under the appropriate **Creative Commons** licensing.
- Use copyright-free music, images and sound.
- Use material that is in the public domain or for which the copyright has expired.
- Approach independent bands and ask them for permission to use one of their songs. Offer to give them a copy of your film.
- Create your own or ask a friend. As part of your production work, you can create some music, a soundtrack, sound effects, logos or graphics that you or others could use.

Creative Commons

There are several Creative Commons licence types. Some creators let you use and modify their content; others will only give permission for non-commercial use. For more information about Creative Commons licensing, see its website.

Some organisations publish content with one of the many Creative Commons licences. Online academic newspaper *The Conversation* is one of these. It is funded by universities, cultural institutions and donations. All the material on *The Conversation* site is released under a Creative Commons licence because it believes that 'Access to independent, high-quality, authenticated, explanatory journalism underpins a functioning democracy.' To find out more about *The Conversation*, follow the weblink to read its charter.

The Conversation releases its content using Creative Commons in order to spread knowledge. Articles are republished in newspapers and online around the world. There is even one in this chapter! To find out how and why it does this, follow the weblink.



Activity 8.29 Creative Commons resources

Search the internet for material released under a Creative Commons licence that may be useful to you and your classmates. This may include images, sound and music.

Compile a database of this material for everyone to share.

FILMS, TELEVISION, DOWNLOADS, STREAMING, MOBILES AND THE FUTURE OF SCREEN VIEWING

Digital technologies have heralded fierce competition for our eyeballs. No longer are audiences restricted to the cinema or a limited number of free-to-air and pay-TV channels for their viewing pleasures. Cinema and broadcast television now compete with catch-up TV, streaming, downloading and even old-school DVDs. Content can be viewed at huge multiplex cinemas or in tiny art-house cinemas, at home on increasingly huge screens or on computers and mobile devices. There has never been more choice in content and ways to watch. It is a pity there are only 24 hours in a day.

Cinema

There is something magical about going to the movies. Watching films in a cinema is a favourite pastime of Australians. Every year, 69 per cent of Australians visit the cinema, and since 2000 this percentage has remained fairly stable. However, over this time the number of visits per person per year has steadily declined from 8.4 to 6.5.

Cinemas are worried by the competition from television streaming services and ever-increasing home screen sizes. And they should be. When video hire became available in the early 1980s, cinema visits



Weblink



Weblink

dropped dramatically before rising again at the turn of the century. Recent data, however, has shown that those who watch the most films at home attend the cinema at higher rates than average and they also watch more films on mobile devices than most people.

To counter the rise in home video-on-demand viewing, cinemas continue to offer enhanced cinema experiences with new technologies, including 4K screens, high-definition programming, digital projection, immersive sound and personalised customer service, but the main changes in screen consumption are not at the cinema but in the home.

How we consume television

Broadcast television, which includes free-to-air and subscription television, remains the dominant form of screen consumption. Watching broadcast TV accounts for 86.4 per cent of Australian viewers' screen time. Of this, 83 per cent is free-to-air TV and 17 per cent is subscription TV. To see when and what viewers watch, search OzTAM, the official television audience measurement (TAM) source for Australia's metropolitan and subscription television.

Traditionally the lightest viewers, 72.3 per cent of those in the 16–24 age group still watch broadcast TV each week. This age group also watches the most video content online, mainly through YouTube, and is also the group that illegally downloads content the most, although illegal downloading is now no longer the norm in this age group.

Freeview is a catch-up service for free-to-air television channels. In 2016 it launched Freeview FV, a mobile app that allows viewers to watch from any device. About half of all Australians online use catch-up TV, watching on a range of devices – 50 per cent is watched on a tablet, 32 per cent on a computer and 18 per cent on a mobile phone.

Audiences like to post, comment on or read comments about their TV viewing on social media. Television companies encourage this interaction through dedicated program sites and social media pages. Every week, 32 per cent of people in the 16–24 age group interact or post comments on social media about TV, while 36 per cent read others' comments. What do you comment on when you are discussing TV?

Video on demand, which includes subscription, streaming and downloaded content, is the fastest growing market for screen viewing. Made possible by developments in technology and faster internet speeds, video on demand has changed the viewing habits of Australians. Video on demand has also spawned a new media term, 'binge watching', which refers to the viewing of more than one episode in a streamed series or boxed set in a sitting.

YouTube is the main source of downloaded video. Together with the increased availability of legal streaming services such as Stan and Netflix, YouTube has reduced the percentage of the population engaged in pirating or illegally downloading content by about 10 per cent over the years 2015–16. This trend looks likely to continue.

Corresponding with the availability of streaming services, the sales of DVD and Blu-ray discs are in decline, even though many now come with online UltraViolet access. While DVD and Blu-ray discs are still popular as gifts, the appetite for owning a physical copy of a film or TV program or series is waning. The decline also corresponds with changes in laptop computing, where DVD players are increasingly not a feature of new machines.



Activity 8.30 Representing changes in screen time

Using the data above and other data you can obtain from organisations such as those listed below, create an original infographic that explains the trends in Australian screen viewing.

- Free TV
- Think TV
- ASTRA Subscription Media Australia
- Screen Australia video and online
- Screen Australia cinema industry trends
- Freeview
- OzTAM



FOMO, digital detox and RL

One theme running through this chapter is that new media are always distrusted media. This belief is evident in the digital detox movement, which encourages time away from the digital world. Digital detox is a push-back against what some believe is a world in which we suffer from FOMO (fear of missing out), are constantly plugged into technology and therefore do not experience the simple pleasures of real life. Digital detox is based on the idea that before digital media people lived a more authentic and meaningful life. By turning off, it is claimed that people can reconnect with themselves and their community. It is not unusual for digital detoxers to argue that we have an addiction to technology. But what are the facts?

Distrust of technology is as old as technology itself. Part of the digital detox movement is about this distrust. When trains and cars were new, people had to walk in front of them to protect innocent bystanders. Social media is the latest incarnation of this fear. Technological development does change the world, but should we be fearful? Digital media technologies are not going to go away. Perhaps a more useful approach is to constantly evaluate their positives and negatives so that we can use them in an informed way.

FOMO is a thing. We do fear missing out, particularly when we are unhappy or in a state of change. It is easy for someone who is unhappy with their life to compare it to the lives they see on their social media feed, forgetting that on Facebook and Instagram we only see a highlights package of someone's life. Remember the symbolic and technical codes of representation you studied in Chapter 3? We all use them to construct our social media feeds, which are mostly positive. Everyone posts pics of a party or their pets; very few people post images of their grandparents' funerals. Think about what and why we share on social media. It is to build and maintain a relationship with our friends, to make them happy.

Is it true that life before social media was more simple, authentic and meaningful? These claims about the impact of the media reveal a bias towards the apparent simplicity of the old days, which, in people's memories, is often more rosy than was the case. Some aspects of life then were simpler, others more difficult, but most were just different. Homework and research were more difficult without access to the internet, but the depth required by teachers was less because students only had access to their local library. There was no cyberbullying, but the backs of toilet doors were covered in bullying messages. Young people only saw their friends at school or on the weekend, but they got more sleep because they were not distracted by their phones.

The argument that online friends are not as authentic as real-life friends assumes that, because users have a larger number of online friends, they are somehow less connected with them and ignores the fact that real-life friends are almost always online friends too. The term 'friends' is misleading. It was chosen by network designers to represent a sense of relationship that is probably closer to a communicative network than friendship. Within social media, users have genuine friends and also acquaintances. Contact with each group varies. When Auntie Betty asks to friend you, she doesn't want to be your friend, she wants to stay in contact. When your best friend posts a snap, your reaction is much more personal.

If we digitally detox, will we reconnect with ourselves and our community? It depends. This argument is built on the idea that local is better than distant, which is the case for some but not for others. If you live on a farm an hour's drive from school or travel across Melbourne to go to a particular school, part of your identity and much of your community may well be online. There is nothing to say that this community is any less strong than that of the physical place in which you live.

'Digital addiction' is the term used to explain the psychological effects of digital media use and the impact this may have on mental, social and physical wellbeing. The media is full of lurid stories about digital addiction. Many of these stories rely on research to assert that digital addiction is or is not a thing. This research is contradictory, and when reading it we should be aware that both the researchers and the media are stakeholders in the digital addiction debate.

It is certain that the way we live has changed due to digital media and that some users do not know how to stop, but is this due to the technology? Social media and video games light up the reward centres of the brain to give us pleasure, but most users are able to regulate their media use.

The idea of digital addiction rests in part with the newness of digital media. We don't have the language yet to be able to properly describe overuse, and the newness of digital media means that they are still considered popular culture rather than high culture and therefore less worthy of our time. We don't speak of avid readers as addicted to literature, nor do we use the metaphors of drug or gambling addiction to explain excessive studying.

For those who are unable to control their use of digital media, there are more questions than answers and the evidence is divided. For Media students, the first questions should be: Why do some users behave in an excessive manner? What needs does this behaviour fulfil and what can be done about it? Who are the stakeholders and what do they stand to win or lose in the debates about the impact of digital media on our lives? In our world, it is not possible to completely digitally detox. How can we manage ourselves?

Activity 8.31 Case study: the unplugged wedding



Ariel Meadow Stallings, Offbeat Empire



Brittany Barclay Photography – Denton, Texas

Alex and Eric welcome you to their wedding celebration. We have established an Instagram page and Facebook Group for everyone to share their images, videos and thoughts with each other and with those who can't be with us today.

The Facebook group is open to everyone and is called:
Alexandra and Eric's Wedding Days

The Instagram page is called:
Alexandra.Eric.Celebrate

Study the three images above. They each represent different approaches to guests taking photographs at weddings. These images also represent very different views about the impact of digital media on contemporary life.

Create a list of the stakeholders in this debate and for each note what they stand to win or lose in the debate about who should be allowed to take photographs at weddings.

Who is right? Create a report on your analysis.

VIDEO GAMES

The world of gaming is big business. Globally, the games industry is now bigger than the feature film industry. Worldwide, the gaming market is estimated at \$89 billion in 2018. Since the early days of *Pong*, *Pac-Man* and *Space Invaders*, games have developed exponentially in complexity, style and scope, and the demographics of players have changed too. It is a long way from these then state-of-the-art classics of the 1970s to *Lego Star Wars*, *Call of Duty* or even *Minecraft*. To get a feel for the dramatic development of computer and video games, why not play some online Flash simulations of classic early games? They are easy to find – just google your favourite title.

For the purposes of this text, the term 'video game' includes all video, computer, console, platform, online and mobile phone games.

Video games represent a new lively art, one appropriate for the digital age. They open up new aesthetic experiences and transform the computer screen into a realm of experimentation and innovation that is broadly accessible.

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

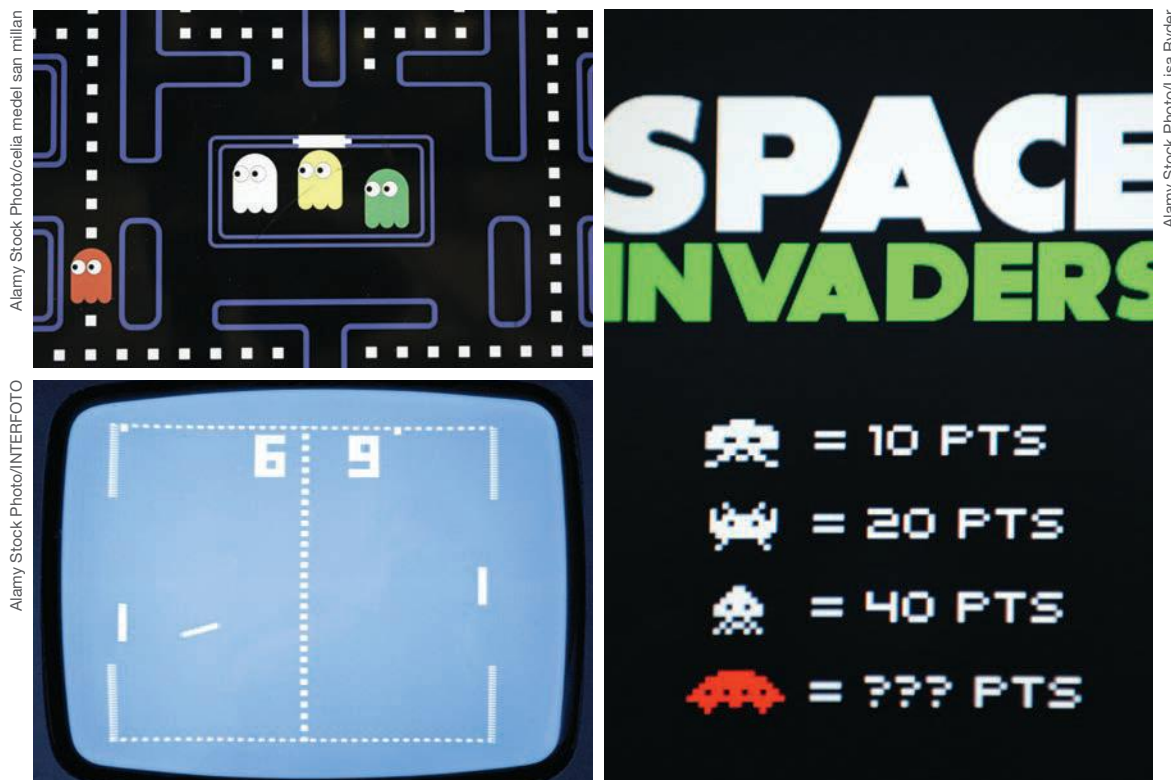


Figure 8.29 Games have developed exponentially since the days of *Pac-Man*, *Space Invaders* and *Pong*.

Activity 8.32 A computer game timeline

Research the history of computer and video games. Start by using the following words in your Google search:

- video/computer games
- console games
- arcade games
- platform games
- online games
- hand-held games
- mobile games.

Now draw up a timeline, or create a multimedia presentation that illustrates the development of games over the years. What were the standout technologies that facilitated each new game development?

The bottom line

The interactive entertainment industry is the fastest growing media market in the world today. The Australian industry, small by international standards, is nevertheless significant, as the facts reveal:

- Game merchandise worth nearly \$3 billion is sold each year.
- Game sales are evenly split between physical and online purchases.
- The fastest growing market is for subscription gaming.
- Mobile gaming is increasing by over 50 per cent per year.

Video games are bad for you? That's what they said about rock-n-roll.

Shigeru Miyamoto, Nintendo games creator

Games are controversial

Computer games remain the most misunderstood of all media forms. Debate about them is fodder for tabloid media headlines and expert opinion alike. Discourses about gaming are characterised by moral panic, stereotyping and misinformation, and usually framed in terms of binary oppositions, with stakeholders unwilling to shift or even acknowledge the validity of alternative viewpoints. Despite almost 100 years of study into media influence, there is still enormous controversy about each new media form – in this case, the impact of computer games on players and the community. Why is this the case?

Total US sales of video game hardware and software increased 204% from 1994 to 2014, reaching \$13.1 billion in 2014, while violent crimes decreased 37% and murders by juveniles acting alone fell 76% in that same period.

<http://videogames.procon.org>

Activity 8.33 Investigating popular beliefs about computer games

- 1 Research the views of your community about computer and video games. Start with your class and then expand your research to friends and family. It is important to include the opinions of a range of ages and video game experience in your research.
 - a Are there any differences of opinion among those you have surveyed, based on gender, age, game-playing experience or other factors?
 - b To what do you attribute these differences?
- 2 Choose one opinion that is popular among your research subjects. Research this opinion to determine the degree to which it is based in fact, and then write a report that outlines the results of your research.

More than half of the US adult population is playing video games. Media panics over video games should become more obviously ridiculous for everyone involved.

Jesper Juul, ludologist (game theorist)

What's in a game?

It has been suggested that controversy about computer games rests on two words: game and play. For many, these words suggest childhood pursuits – children play games, adults do not. But we know this is not true of computer games; they are more often played by adults than children. The issue is that computer games are not just games, they are much bigger than that.

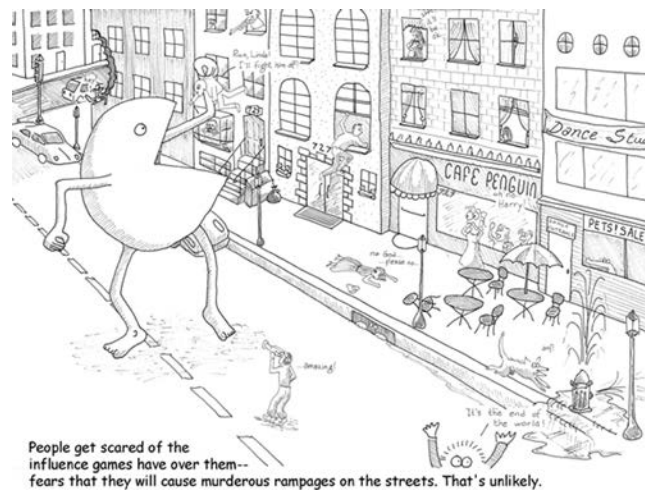
Academics have tried to find ways to discuss and analyse games. Their efforts have been concentrated in four approaches:

- Social science: what games do to people, including effects such as learning and violence
- Humanities: how games construct meaning within the context in which they are played
- The arts: aesthetics and the use of the codes and conventions of media
- Industry and technology: how games are developed, constructed and marketed.

The problem with this is that there is little convergence between the research in each area. Computer games are mostly rule-driven quests; it is the context of how, when and why such quests are played that is important if society is to understand the conflicting discourses that surround them.

The games people play reveal a great deal about them.

Marshall McLuhan, media theorist, 1964



A Theory of Fun For Game Design, 2nd Edition. Published by O'Reilly Media, Inc. © Raph Koster 2013. All rights reserved.

Who plays games?

Even after 50 years of computer games, gamers still get bad press. Stereotyped as nerdy boys locked in their bedrooms surrounded by empty pizza boxes and smelly socks, this representation is far from the truth. The Interactive Games & Entertainment Association (IGEA), together with Bond University, conducts annual research into gaming in Australia. This research reveals the extent of gaming in Australia and why players game. The bottom line? Gamers enjoy the fun and buzz of games, the challenges of gaming and the sense of **agency** it provides as they control their own lives and those of their online avatars.

Study the infographic in Figure 8.30. Find some information that is new to you and discuss it with your classmates.

It is important to note that IGEA commissions Bond University to conduct this research and that the direction of the research is skewed in favour of gaming. Nevertheless, such research helps break down the stereotypes of gamers and gaming that is often circulated in traditional media. Remember that traditional media are stakeholders; they want you to consume their products, not play games.

The graphs in Figure 8.31 indicate that the news is not all bad about the perception of harm from video games. In fact, it is clear that, while adults and children have concerns about new media, these concerns are fairly evenly distributed between the internet, social media and video games.

The data reveals interesting similarities and differences in the order of concerns between adults and children. Study the graphs to note these. What do they tell you about the differences in adults' and children's perception of harm?



Weblink

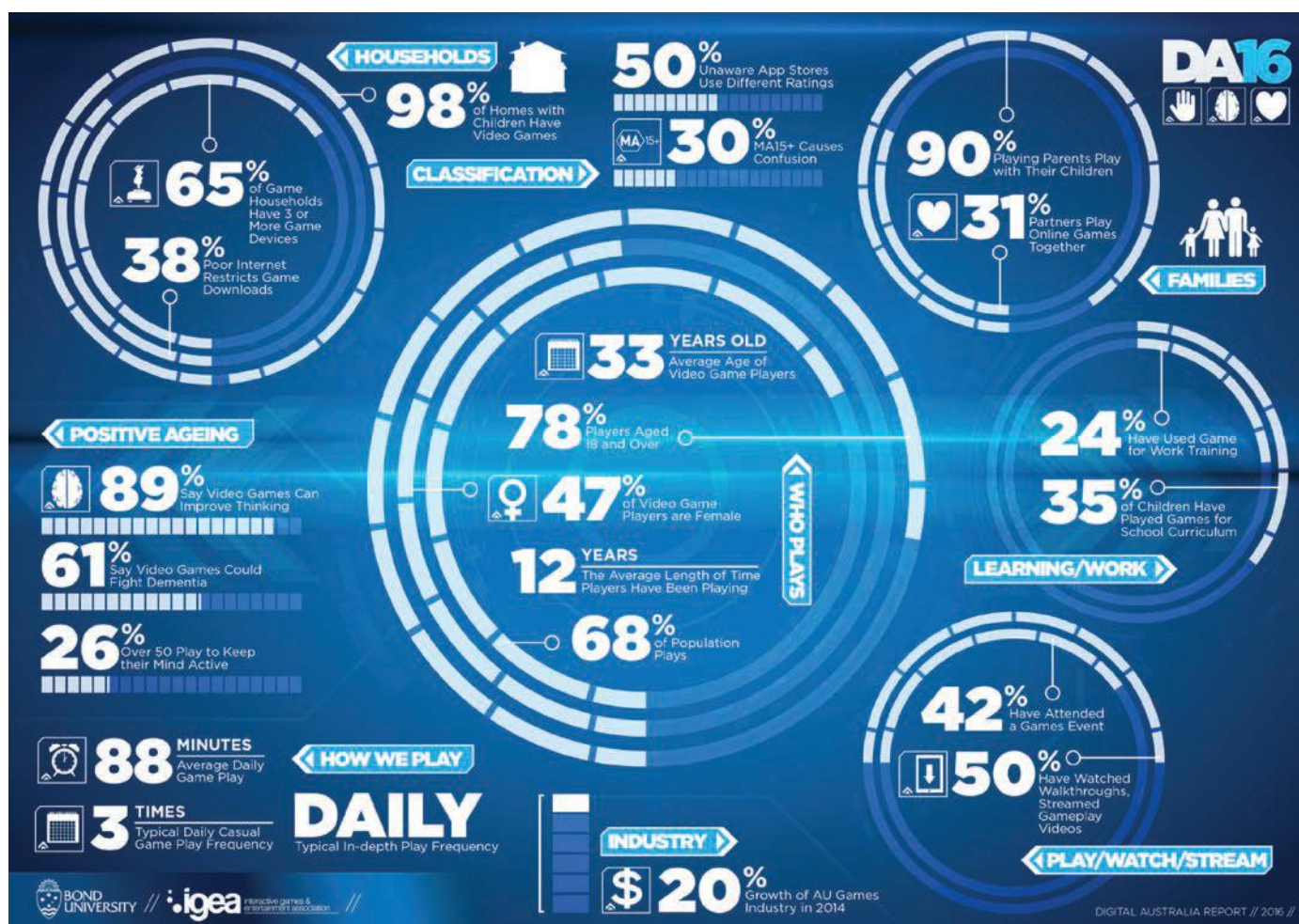


Figure 8.30 Video games in Australia. Source: Brand, JE & Todhunter, S (2015). *Digital Australia 2016*. Eveleigh, NSW: IGEA. CC BY 2.0

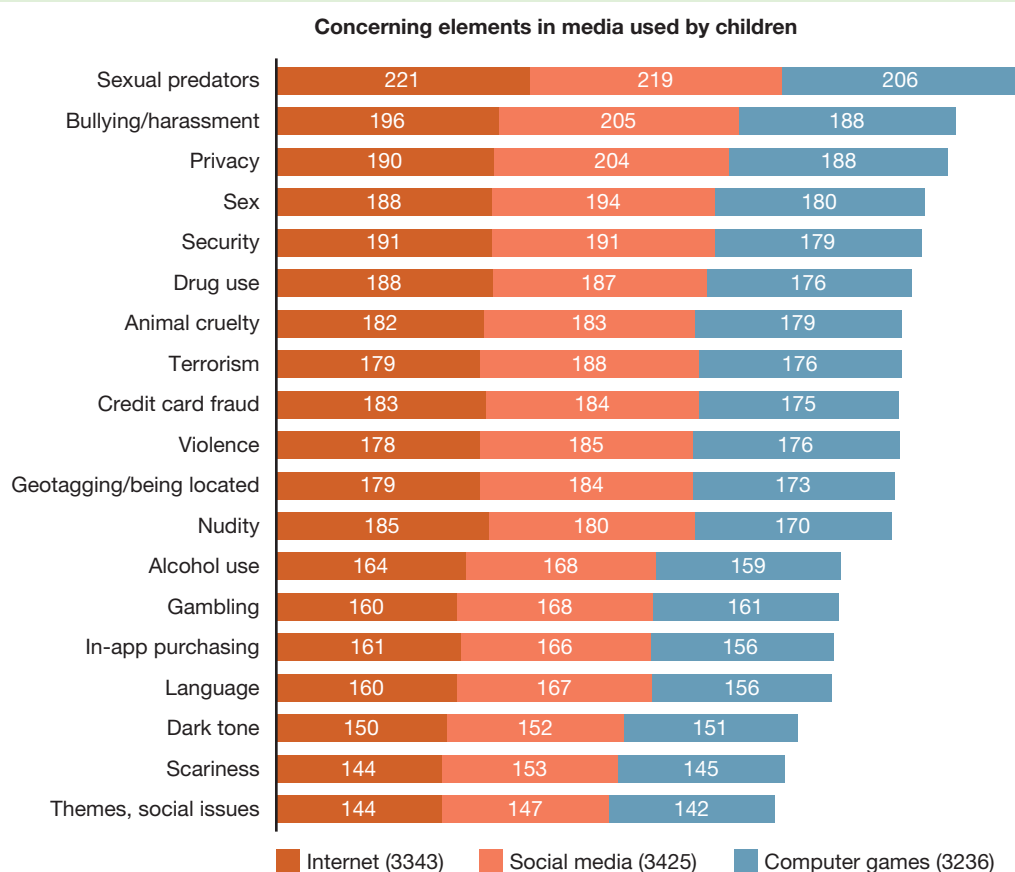
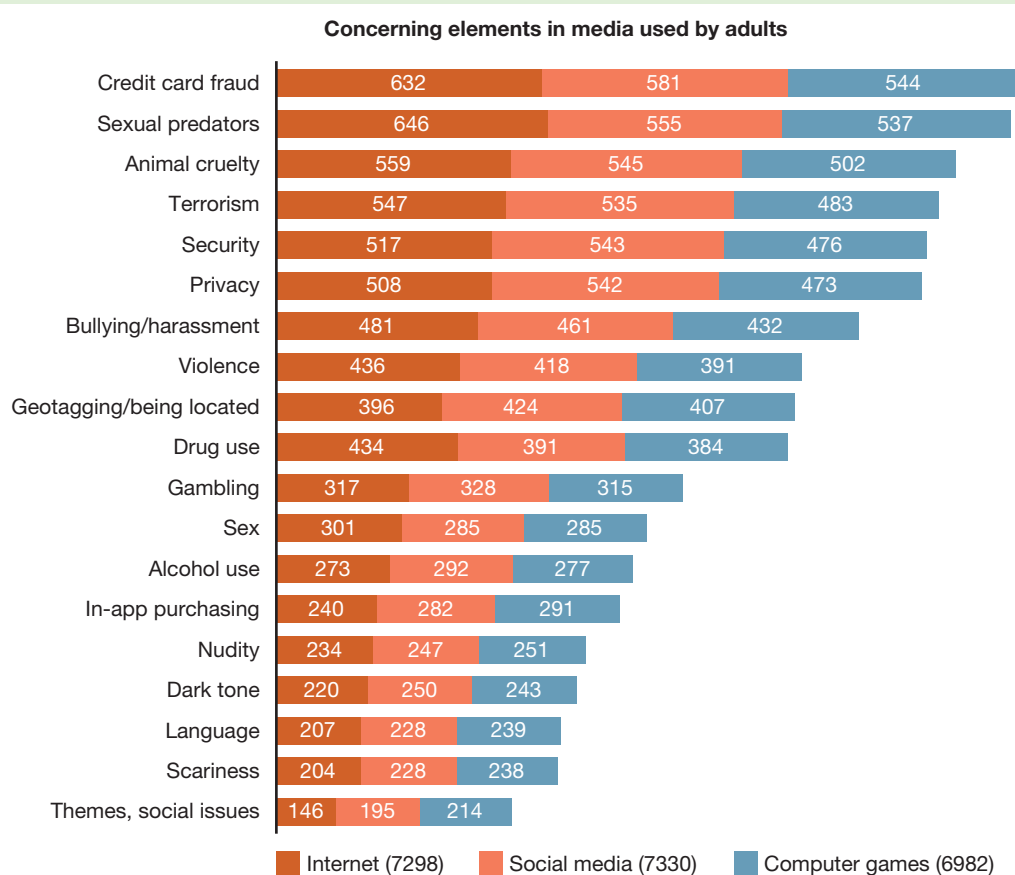


Figure 8.31 Concerns about new media. Source: Brand, JE & Todhunter, S (2015). *Digital Australia 2016*. Eveleigh, NSW: IGEA. CC BY 2.0

GAMES FOR CHANGE

G4C: fun and games can be political too

Have you ever played a game designed to teach you about something?

Games for Change (G4C) is a non-profit organisation that empowers game creators and social innovators to drive real-world impact through digital games. G4C's mission statement states that it aims to 'leverage entertainment and engagement for social good'. G4C highlights a range of games from developers who create games that examine various world issues, including some designed to immerse you in the world of refugees – you can play as a refugee or as a border protection officer – games about health, the arts, and games designed to make you a happier person. One thing is certain about Games for Change: you will always learn something and will never be the same person again after playing them. You may cry.

Games for Change supports individuals and organisations to create games that develop understanding of issues across the world. It provides tools and support for game designers and is always looking for gamers to register, play and share the games on its site.

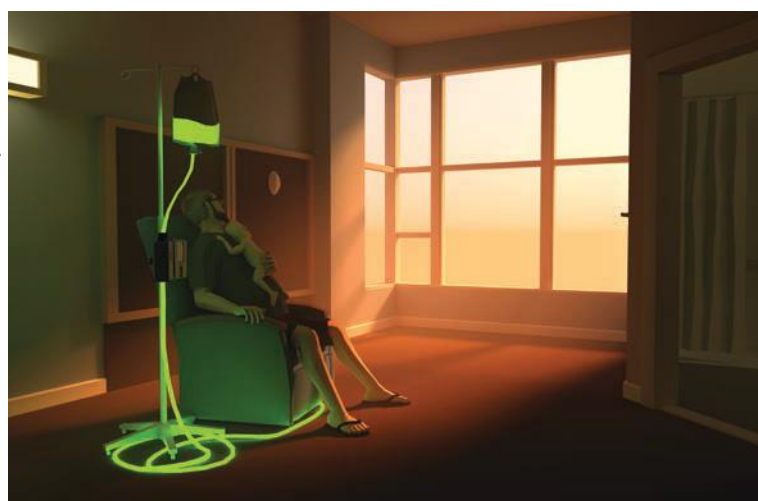


Figure 8.32 Still from *That Dragon, Cancer*, a game created by the father of a cancer sufferer

Classification in an online world

All video games, films and some literature must be classified before they are allowed to be sold or distributed in Australia.

Classification is the job of the Classification Board. Despite a small number of concerns expressed by gamers and some members of the public about whether video game classification is too hard or too lenient, the Australian population generally supports the classification system and particularly values the ratings attached to each game. However, with nearly half of all games distributed online and the sheer numbers of games released every year, many from small independent producers, it is not possible for the Classification Board to keep up with demand.

Video games are the first major media form to adopt a system for classification that accounts for the online media environment. The Classification Board has adopted the International Age Rating Coalition (IARC) system. IARC allows developers across the world to rate their games and receive a classification appropriate to the countries in which they wish to distribute the game. The system streamlines the classification of games for digital distribution. Up until its adoption in June 2015, about 500 games had been classified by the Classification Board. In the next six months, 380 000 games were classified using the IARC tool. Due to the cost and time involved, most of these games would never have been released in Australia without IARC. Independent developers can now release games through digital storefronts partnered with the IARC, such as Google Play, Nintendo eShop, Windows Store and Firefox Marketplace. To see how the system works, follow the weblink to view the IARC video. For more on classification, see Chapter 13.



Weblink



Figure 8.33 The future is virtual.

The future of gaming

The anticipated widespread utilisation of virtual reality technology is expected to boost economic activity in video game and related industries. In 2016 the Australian Parliament published a report into the gaming industry, *Game on: more than playing around*, in which it reported that the industry for virtual reality and augmented reality 'is estimated to be worth \$150 billion by 2020', a significant increase on the current industry revenue of \$2 billion to \$3 billion. The committee heard that virtual reality 'will be as transformative and ubiquitous as the internet or smart phones'.

Activity 8.34 A VR world

Virtual reality is currently undergoing a maturation process as it seeks to find a place in the media world. Developers are experimenting with new ways to integrate it into games, education and entertainment, and designers are creating headsets that are easier to use. Where will it go from here?

Conduct some research into current uses of virtual reality technologies and predictions for its future. Are the predictions positive or negative? In what ways do you think this technology will develop?

Create a poster to illustrate your findings.

THE 'NEXT BIG THING'

The narrative of media and change is littered with predictions, successes and failures. There have been so many 'next big things' that have or have not materialised. The success stories simply become unremarkable parts of everyday life. Google is a great example. The failures may have been overhyped, quickly overtaken by better technology or simply not have taken hold in the public's imagination, as was the case for HD DVD. Many new technologies and texts shine brightly for a short time and then fade as the next big thing emerges. Does anyone play *Second Life* any more? One thing is certain: there will always be change.

It is not always possible to know or predict whether the next big thing will be a positive or negative force in society. We do know that it will be distrusted and controversial at first, but how can we judge its impact on audiences, institutions, industries, individuals and society?

There are a few questions that can help us wade through the hype and dire predictions of the end of the world as we know it. The following checklist for evaluating new media might help:

- Who created it and why?
- What is hype and what is real?
- Where will it be used and who is the target market?
- What are the sociopolitical contexts of its creation, distribution and consumption?
- Who or what are the stakeholders and what do they stand to win or lose?
- Where does the money come from and where are the profits going?

Activity 8.35 A digital life and a virtual future

Using all of the research and activities you have completed for this area of study, write a report or create an online demonstration of your understanding of media and change and what it means for your life.



OUTCOME 1

On completion of this unit the student should be able to analyse how narratives are constructed and distributed, and how they engage, are consumed and are read by the intended audience and present day audiences.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 1.

KEY KNOWLEDGE

- the characteristics and construction of media narratives in selected media forms
- how audiences from different periods of time engage with, consume and read media narratives
- the relationship between and the function of media codes and conventions to convey meaning in selected media forms
- the relationship between media narratives and the ideological and institutional contexts in which they are produced, distributed, consumed and read
- the way ideologies shape media narratives
- the relationship between media narratives and audiences
- appropriate media language.

KEY SKILLS

- explain the characteristics and construction of media narratives in selected media forms
- discuss how media narratives are constructed, consumed and read by audiences from different periods of time
- analyse the relationship between and the function of media codes and conventions to convey meaning in selected media forms
- analyse the relationship between media narratives and the ideological and institutional contexts of production, distribution, consumption and reception
- discuss how ideologies shape media narratives
- discuss the relationship between media narratives and audiences
- discuss audience engagement with, consumption and reading of media narratives
- use appropriate media language.

For the purposes of this area of study, the media product selected for study will comprise of one of the following:

- at least two feature length film products of one hour or more in length or the equivalent length in television, streamed, radio or audio products
- two photographic series of at least six images each
- two print productions of at least 15 pages each. Fictional and/or non-fictional narratives

may be studied. At least one text must have been released in the five years prior to the commencement of the year of study.

Area of Study Outcomes, Key Knowledge and Key Skills points are reproduced by permission from the VCE Media Study Design (2018–2022), © VCAA.

When you're doing a film, narrative is your most important tool, but it's a tool to create a cinematographic experience, to create those moments that are beyond narrative, that are almost an abstraction of that moment that hits your psyche.

Alfonso Cuarón, film director

Sometimes reality is too complex. Stories give it form.

Jean Luc Godard, film director,
screenwriter, film critic

There is commerciality in storytelling, even in a film or a piece of literature. These things exist. That's why stories came to be: to hold attention and, while you're not looking, you'll get hopefully some nutritional value that the author has been working up. That's narrative; that's passing stuff down.

Shane Carruth, writer and director

NARRATIVES

This area of study brings together everything we love about media. It is all about narratives: what they are, how and why they are constructed, how they make us feel, what they tell us about ourselves and society and why audiences love them.

I do think that narrative is very important – I think that we use narrative to organize the world around us, and so it does matter a lot what kinds of narratives we have in our inventories and which ones are reinforced so often and so strongly that we habitually reach for them without thinking.

Ann Leckie, author and editor

Stories in all their glorious forms are the reason most students choose media: to watch them, study them and make them. Close your eyes and think about your favourite stories right now. Picture yourself as you consumed them. How old were you? Where were you? Who were you with? Why did you choose the story? How did it make you feel? Share your favourite stories with your classmates. These stories can be media stories, your favourite books, from the radio or even ones your grandma made up for you as a child. Tell your classmates about these stories and why you love them. While you are doing this, notice the mood in the room as everyone sinks into memories of warm and fuzzy engagement with their favourite stories. What you are doing is constructing narratives about narratives. Write a list of the top narratives on the board. Don't forget, some of them will be recent but some will be among the first you ever consumed. See if you can work out some patterns in the storyline, characters, genre or media form in the types of stories you and your classmates loved and shared.

It is clear from sharing your favourites with your classmates that you are already a skilful reader of narratives, you can subconsciously deconstruct the codes and conventions with which they have been constructed. This area of study is designed to develop your skills, provide the language that will help you express your understanding at a more sophisticated level and illustrate how narratives participate in society's discourses through the ways they express ideologies and values.

Stories tell us about our culture

Our cultural consumption, and in particular our media consumption, teach us about our society and how to act in it.

Professor John Hartley, Dean of the Creative Industries Faculty, Queensland University of Technology, 2002

The relationship between the media and society is a complex one. Of course, the values and ideologies of a society must influence its media texts, but how? Audiences enjoy the media that they can relate to, that speak to them of their own experience or understanding of the way the world works. Texts that do this rate well. It would be professionally and financially irresponsible for film directors, newspaper editors, photographers or advertising executives to ignore or insult the core beliefs of the very market they are trying to influence.

But do media producers actually sit down and construct a media production with a cynical eye on the demographic of the target market? Does Baz Luhrmann really devote hours of pre-production to

matching the attitudes of his heroes and heroines to those of his imagined potential cinema patron? What about the overwhelming urge to create the greatest story ever told, to win an AACTA, to inform a news-hungry readership, to make an audience laugh or cry, or simply to get them to buy more toilet paper? While they have to keep an eye on the bottom line, the need to communicate is the key motivator.

The influence of society's ideologies on media texts is multifaceted and depends on a range of factors, including the style and genre of a text, the circumstances of its creation, and the time and place of its consumption. Ads are usually created on the basis of market research – they must touch the needs or desires of the target market in order to sell the product. A feature film may well be a great story beautifully told, but producers know that if it flops at the box office the director's career could be over. Documentaries are structured to both inform and entertain; to offer hope, alarm and joy in a world that too often seems doomed. Podcasts are designed to be listened to and no-one shoots and publishes or hangs a photographic series without an understanding of their audience. Values, beliefs and ideologies underpin all media texts.

Realism

Embedded in most narratives is the notion of **realism**. This realism may be literal or it may be symbolic, and is understood in many ways. Realism may be considered as truthfulness, as in news reportage, or in terms of how true to life or realistic an image is. Realism may also be evident in terms of the relationship between the representations of reality contained within the text, real life and the purpose of the text or the ideological conditions of its creation. To analyse realism in media texts, Media students ask questions about the intended audience and purpose of the text, and about how, why and by whom it was created.

Feature films, documentaries and TV narratives commonly have a sense of realism at their heart. Realism may appear on screen as recognisable (if somewhat exaggerated) situations where characters do and say things that are familiar and logical to an audience, even if they do not have direct experience of the reality represented. Courtroom dramas are examples of this form of realism.

Realism may also be understood as symbolic, representing a universal truth through imaginative fictional characters, plots and locations, as was the case in James Cameron's *Avatar* (2009). The audience recognises that the avatars, while not 'real' in the sense we commonly understand reality, are nevertheless real in the sense that their struggle to save Pandora from ecological catastrophe is a metaphor. Similarly, animated texts such as *The Lion King*, *My Neighbor Totoro* and *A Scanner Darkly* are not literally realistic but symbolically realistic. Documentary texts use their own codes and conventions to construct realism (see page 86).

Realism is a kind of pact between media makers and their audiences; we pretend that what we see, hear or listen to is 'real' in some sense. We do this because media texts are based on a shared understanding between producers and audiences about the values and ideologies that influence the way characters in media texts would and should act. That is why in media texts, good usually wins over evil and love so often conquers all.

WHAT IS NARRATIVE?

Narrative appears to be a contingent universal of human experience. It cuts across distinctions of art and science, fiction and nonfiction, literature and the other arts.

David Bordwell, *The Poetics of Cinema*, 2007

Narratives are stories, but they are also so much more. A narrative can be defined as a fictional or non-fictional account of a series of actions and events structured in a connected or ordered manner. Narratives engage audiences through structured action and reaction that drives a story to its resolution.

The media tells stories in the form of narratives: funny stories, real stories, scary stories, old stories and new ones; stories with morals and stories that show us about ourselves – how to be and how not to be. Narratives are about people, places, events, ideas, values and the world we inhabit.

For most audiences, it is the storytelling aspect of the media that we love the most. From the earliest times around a campfire to the many sophisticated forms in which we continue to enjoy them today, humans have always craved stories. Our storytelling history means that as individuals and as cultures we are so familiar with patterns of narrative that they seem as natural to us as breathing. Yet this apparent naturalness is illusory. All narratives are constructed. In fact, it is often only when stories are

told badly that we notice the nature of construction. A great narrative wraps us in its world and takes us along on the journey.

While narratives can be found in all media forms and most texts, this outcome deals specifically with fictional and non-fictional media narratives in feature film, television and streamed television, radio, print and photography. There are a million stories out there and, it seems, a million different ways of telling them. Each medium has its own particular storytelling strengths and weaknesses.

Narrative is a thing

We need narrative; it feeds us in a particular way.

Joss Whedon, film director

Humans use narrative to make sense of the world and to explain it to others. Narratives are embedded in every aspect of our being and are constructed using well-known storytelling codes and conventions. Try it now. Imagine you have to tell a story to your classmates. Close your eyes and picture yourself beginning. It is likely you would alter your stance to sit more upright and for your voice to sound louder and more authoritative and that you would begin with one of the conventional storytelling phrases such as ‘Once upon a time ...’ or something similar. The fact that just about everyone in your class would begin the story in a similar way tells us that storytelling is deeply ingrained into our cultural knowledge. If a student in Iceland or Kenya or Vanuatu were asked to do the same task, they would adopt the cultural expectations of their homeland. If you have students from other countries in your class, ask them how their story would begin.

Activity 9.1 The story of how I came to be here

Take out a fresh piece of paper and, without discussing it with anyone, write a story entitled ‘How I came to be here’. Your story should be a couple of paragraphs in length. Now turn your story into a visual narrative by designing a series of Instagram images or a storyboard.

When you have finished, share your story with your classmates.

How many stories were similar in content or style?

Why do you think this was the case?

WHAT IS IDEOLOGY?

Ideology can be defined as a system of ideas and ideals that are used to explain or make sense of society. Ideology is made up of society’s values, economic and political theory and policy. Originally, the idea of ideology was based on the work of Karl Marx, who believed that culture expressed the ideology of the ruling class. Today cultural theorists recognise that we cannot reduce our understanding of culture to one theory. Instead, they study the relationship between the economic, political, social and cultural aspects of a culture. Thus ideology is not understood as one thing, even though it is often pitched as a universal truth, but as a collection of beliefs held by an individual, group or society.

Ideology can mean the world views of dominant groups in society that are used to justify and maintain their power. It can also mean the world views that explain the actions of any social group in society. For some, ideology is seen as ‘the truth’, the only way of thinking. For others, ideology is seen as ‘a truth’ and is subject to revision. For more on this topic, search Wikipedia, which has an excellent explanation of the facets of ideology.

By ideology I mean the mental frameworks – the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representation – which different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of, figure out and render intelligible the way society works.

Stuart Hall, cultural theorist

Because media texts, including narratives, are created within society, they express or comment on the ideas, beliefs, values, issues and ideologies of the society in which they have been created. In terms of narrative, ideology is the frame of values and beliefs that inform a narrative. These beliefs are often expressed in terms of opposites – good and bad, beautiful and ugly, weak and strong. Within a text, the creator employs narrative strategies in the form of technical and symbolic codes and conventions to structure the narrative and position the consumer to support or question the ideology expressed in the text.

For many narrative texts that are popular in the Western world, such as those emanating from the United States or Britain, the shared culture between these countries and those where narratives are distributed means that audiences understand the ideological basis on which they are created. Texts from countries that do not share the same cultural understanding, however, may be read quite differently by audiences in another society.

Stories are a tool used to communicate ideology. Think of the books that were read to you as a child; they invariably contained a moral lesson, such as be kind to strangers, do not steal, play nicely with your siblings and help those in need. Apart from living in your family, these stories are among the first examples of society's ideology to which you were exposed.

It is a fundamental premise of communication studies that all communication takes place via codes

Since it is the case that the codes we use are the result of conventions arrived at by the users of those codes, then it is reasonable to suppose that the values of the users will in some way be incorporated into those codes. They will, for example, have developed signs for those things they agree to be important, they will probably have developed a whole array of signs to draw the distinctions between those things which are of particular significance in their culture.

In other words, you might reasonably expect that the ideologies prevalent in those cultures will have been incorporated into the codes used.

... 'reality' is always encoded, or rather the only way we can perceive and make sense of reality is by the codes of our culture. There may be an objective, empiricist reality out there, but there is no universal, objective way of perceiving and making sense of it. What passes for reality in any culture is the product of the culture's codes, so 'reality' is always already encoded, it is never 'raw'.

John Fiske, *Television Culture*, 1987

Dominant ideology

The United States is unusual among the industrial democracies in the rigidity of the system of ideological control – 'indoctrination', we might say – exercised through the mass media.

Noam Chomsky, social critic and futurist

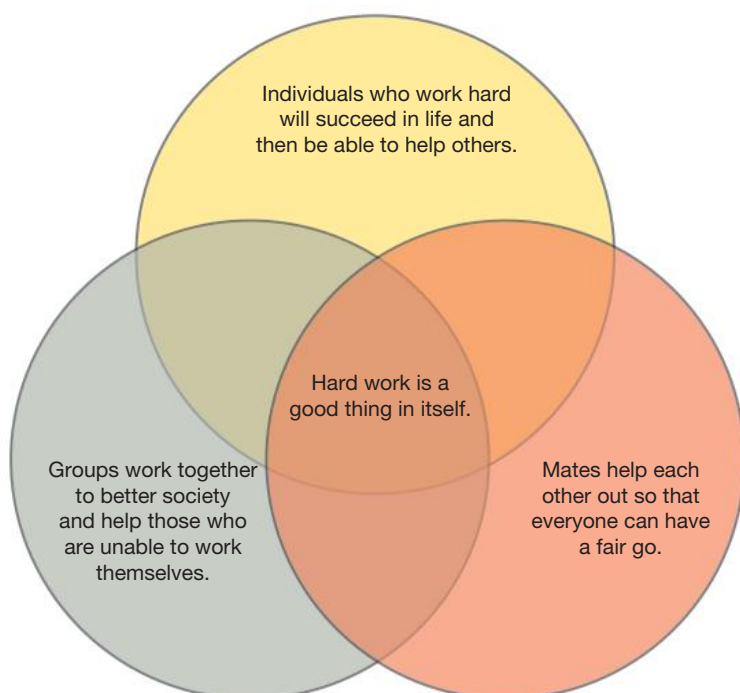


Figure 9.1 Between countries, ideologies may differ slightly in their expression.

How can students identify ideology?

Look for the ideas behind a text, sometimes called the **subtext**; they will point to the ideologies that underpin it. These ideas will usually be found in what is problematic in a narrative; that is, the state of disorder (or disequilibrium) that must be resolved by the narrative's conclusion. The method of resolving the problem will be in tune with the underlying ideology on which the text is based. Because most texts studied in VCE Media are based on the dominant ideology of the place and time in which they were created, they will represent the dominant ideology of that place and time. If those narratives are popular in other countries, it is likely that this popularity reflects shared ideologies, as is the case for many mainstream Hollywood narratives. The expression of these ideologies may differ between countries, but the dominant ideology is similar.

Variations on a dominant ideology

Ideology may be particular to one place or spread more widely across national boundaries. Let's take an example of one ideology that is dominant across the Western world, but varies in the ways it is expressed.

In the West, most people believe in the ideology that hard work is a good thing and that people who don't work are letting society down. However, the expression of this ideology varies between the United States, Britain and Australia.

In America, the ideology of hard work being rewarding is expressed through individualism; individuals who work hard will succeed in life and then be able to help others. The British version of this ideology is more collective; groups work together to better society and help those who are unable to work themselves. In Australia, we express the ideology of hard work through mateship and a fair go. When there is work to be done, mates help each other out so that everyone can have a fair go at success.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEDIA NARRATIVES AND AUDIENCES IS COMPLEX

The relationship between the media and our ideologies, values, beliefs, actions and way of life is a close one. The media teaches us how to live in society, but not in a direct way. We don't simply copy everything that's in the media, just as we don't do everything our parents teach us. Rather, the media lives in the same society as we do. The media is subject to the same influences and ideas that all people and organisations (including other media organisations) are subject to. Everything impacts on and influences everything else. Media theorist Stuart Hall called this 'the circuit of culture' (see Figure 9.2).

Of course, just because the media and its audiences exist in the same society, it does not mean that they are equally powerful within that society. Media organisations can be huge, and with size comes the power to influence. However, as you will discover in Chapter 13, power and agency shift continuously between the media and its audiences.

Feature films and television narratives are very expensive to produce; to make a profit, producers try to create texts that audiences will enjoy. They do this by constructing texts that appeal to the ideologies of the audience in the hope of increasing ticket sales, subscriptions or ratings. On the other hand, the audience has the power to decide whether a narrative is commercially successful by choosing to consume it or not. Producers and audiences are both powerful, but in different ways.

This all sounds very much like Big Brother, and sometimes it can be, but mostly audiences do not even notice the ideological basis on which media texts are based because the texts seem natural, just the way things are. As audiences, we negotiate meaning within the contexts of the personal, cultural, social and political factors with which we live our lives.

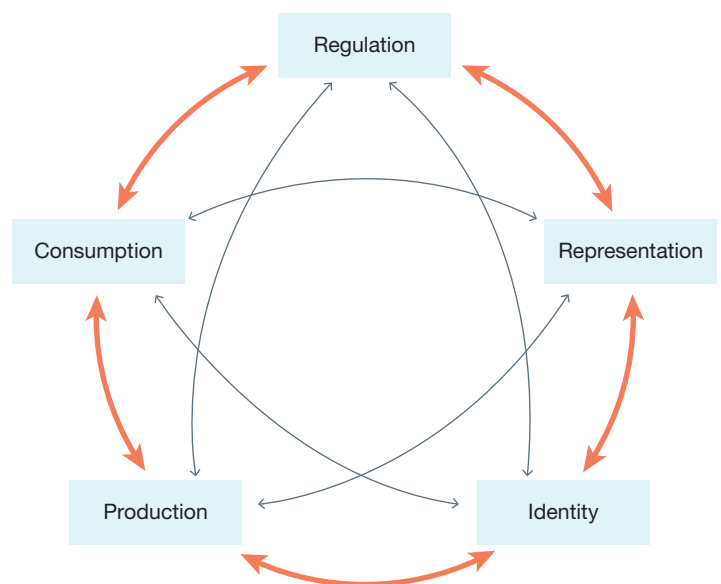


Figure 9.2 Stuart Hall's circuit of culture

Ideology in media texts

When we think about ideologies evident in media narratives, we must differentiate between those held in the time and place of production of a text and those held in society at the time and place of the consumption of that text. The reading of a text may vary according to time, place, culture, gender or age. Different societies may be built on different ideologies and therefore read texts differently.

Meanings are generated not by individuals alone but by collectives. Thus, the idea of culture refers to shared meanings.

Stuart Hall

Sometimes the ideologies on which our society is built appear similar to those of other societies, but subtle differences become apparent when we examine their media products. We might watch a lot of US TV, but Australian values are different from those of America. That is why so many of us hate US remakes of Australian television programs. The remakes do not get the representation of Australian values 'right'; something is missing or is misinterpreted. Do you think Australians sometimes misread the subtle cultural differences in US texts?



Figure 9.3 *My Neighbor Totoro* (1988), directed by Hayao Miyazaki, can be unsettling to a Western audience.

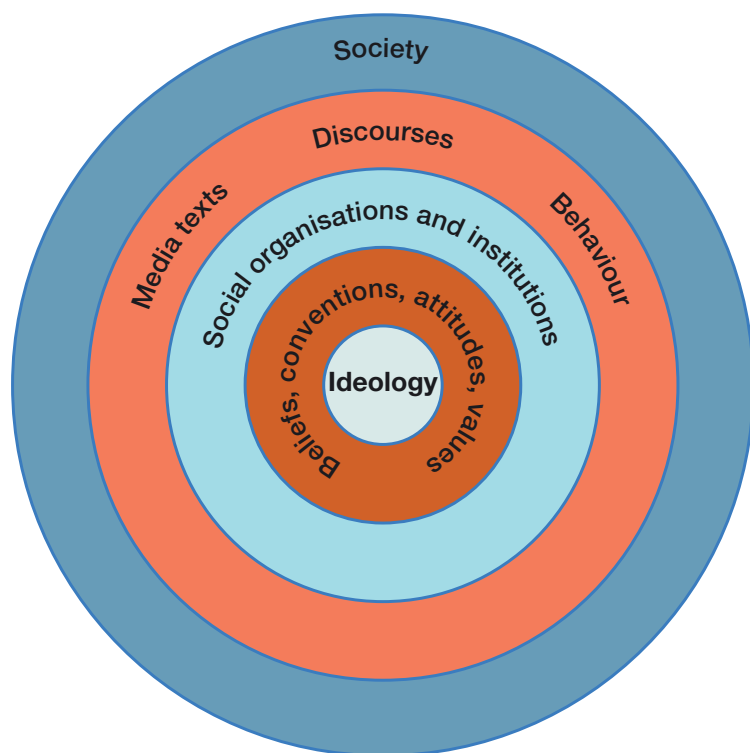


Figure 9.4 Ideology informs all aspects of the relationship between the media and its audiences. Adapted from Helen Spencer-Oatey, *Culturally Speaking: Managing Rapport through Talks across Cultures* (2001), p 5.

It is the same with films from different cultures. The Korean horror film *The Host* (2006), directed by Bong Joon-ho, was entertaining, but Australian audiences were left wondering whether they had failed to notice something important. Lovers of Hayao Miyazaki's animations are always keenly aware that they are missing some of the deeper messages of these works and assume that this is because of cultural differences. They may not be aware that culture is ideological.

Media narratives represent values and values point to ideology

The media creates and distributes narratives that generally represent the ideology of those who financed, constructed and distributed, and stand to gain from a text as well as those who will consume it, who mostly live in the same society.

The key to identifying ideology in the media is analysing representations that express the underlying ideology of a text. This is easier for some texts than for others, but all media texts are based on ideology; if they were not, audiences would not be able to understand them.

How do we identify and deconstruct the representations of values in texts? Can we be sure that our observations and analysis are accurate? How can we know that our readings are not biased by the very media we are analysing?

Deconstructing the codes and conventions that have been used to construct a narrative will identify values that point to the ideology on which it is based. Each element in a narrative builds meaning on multiple levels, beginning with the story. All of this occurs within the context of the society in which it was created.

Think about this landmark in the relationship between women and the media:

In 1968, a group of radical feminists demonstrated against the Miss America Pageant by tossing symbols of women's oppression, including a brassiere, into a 'freedom barrel'. The next day, newspapers ran stories about the protestors burning their bras because they were not pretty

enough to compete for a beauty queen title. Before the world knew it a new urban myth was born. Yes the women did throw items of underclothing into the bin, but they did not set fire to it.

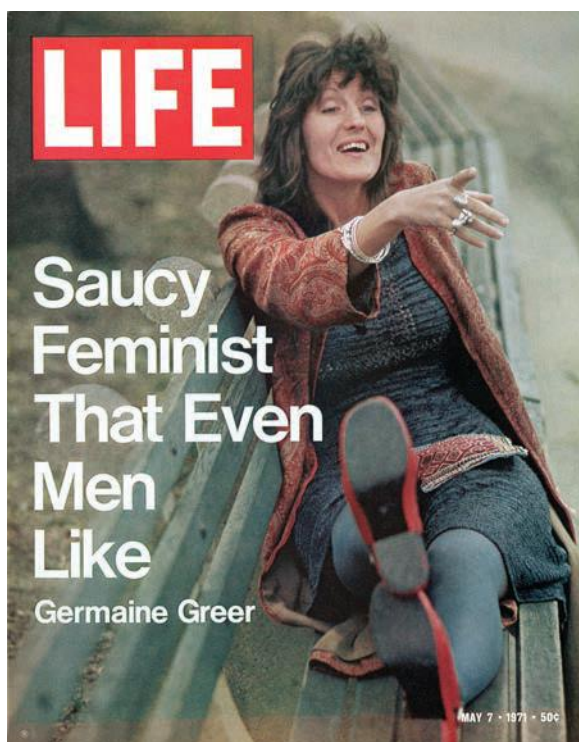
That's a myth. It was the time of draft-card burning, and some smart headline writer decided to call it a 'bra burning' because it sounded insulting to the then-new women's movement. We only threw a bra symbolically in a trash can.

Susan Brownmiller, feminist author and historian

All media texts represent values

When researching the time and place in which the narratives you are studying were created and distributed, be cautious about relying on the media alone as the sole source of your information about the ideologies of the period. Ask yourself: Why was this text created, and how reliable is it? What were the **discourses** of the time that may have informed the texts I am using as a resource? Can I verify my information using another source? If you are a history student, you will know about the importance of primary sources over secondary ones.

All media texts form part of society's discourse on any issue and are subject to the issues and concerns of that society. Representations in media texts will construct ideas to suit the audience and purpose of the text. These representations are not usually some dark form of social engineering or propaganda; it is simply that media texts are part of the society in which they were created and are therefore subject to and part of the discourses around the ideologies of that society. Because media producers and audiences usually live in the same society and share similar backgrounds and beliefs, the content of media texts is framed by this relationship. In Chapter 13, you will learn more about how framing theory works (see page 360).



Getty Images/Vernon Merritt III/The LIFE Premium Collection

CASE STUDY

WONDER WOMAN

Wonder Woman first appeared in DC comic books in 1941. The character was created by psychologist William Moulton Marston in response to criticism at that time that DC Comics were too violent. Wonder Woman was designed as a pacifist who opposed violence.

Wonder Woman was inspired by a real person, Margaret Sanger, an early feminist. Her origin was informed by the literature of the feminist utopia movement of the first decade of the 20th century. Wonder Woman's superhero powers reference the peace movement of the First World War in that, unlike other superheroes, she does not kill her opponents. The character was intended to represent the idea that the world would become safe through democracy, an ideological belief that was held in America during the First World War.

Like Batman and Superman, Wonder Woman was a Second World War superhero; however, the 1970s television reboot saw

her move from fighting the Nazis to working as a law-and-order operative. The 2017 film directed by Patty Jenkins is set during the First World War and represents a deep critique of the futility of war through its depiction of refugees and the horror of chemical weapons. As such, it is very much about the issues of today.

Each iteration of Wonder Woman is informed by the ideologies of its time. While a belief in democracy remains throughout, ideas around issues such as the role of feminism, power and youth culture underpin later versions. All media narratives are a product of the time and place of their creation. Some reinforce popular ideologies, others critique them, some do both. As media students, your job is to look beyond the narratives to analyse the contexts of their production, distribution, consumption and reception in order to discover what this tells us about society. As society changes, so do its narratives and the ways those narratives are read by audiences.



Getty Images/Paul Morigi/WireImage



Alamy Stock Photo/AF archive



Alamy Stock Photo/Atlaspix/Warner Bros

Can we trust media representations?

The media has become a major source of historical information for most audiences. We learn about history by consuming media texts from or about the past. But as we know, each time a subject is represented in the media, there is a risk of misrepresentation or exaggeration.

The media's representation of the 'swinging sixties' is a very good example. Today, we tend to think that the 1960s were about rock and roll, free love and emancipation for everyone, but they weren't. Most people lived ordinary and unrecorded lives – which does not rate well. Mainstream media need an interesting and newsworthy angle. In the 1960s, this angle was hippies and rock stars. Footage of their exploits has come to represent the period. To rely on news coverage of the swinging sixties as realistic representations of normal life would be like relying on Kim Kardashian and Kanye West as a representation of everyday families.

If you are studying a text made in or about the 1960s, ask your grandparents what this decade was really like. Compare and contrast their explanation with what you see in the media. Remember, though, they only lived the 1960s for 10 short years and have watched it on TV for more than 40 years since. Their TV viewing may have coloured their memories of what life was really like for most people. Family photographs may be a more accurate record of the lives of average people at this time, as people tend to create representations of what they regard as positive behaviour in these images.

Films are unusually useful warehouses for their age, storing records of how people talk, love, work, dress and dream. It also means that when considered in a historical sweep, movies can reveal continuities and changes in themes, images, styles and myths.

Douglas Muzzio and Thomas Halper, 'Pleasantville? The Suburb and Its Representation in American Movies', *Urban Affairs Review*, vol. 37, no. 4, 2002

As society changes, so does its media

Media texts are products of society and, when examined in sequence, can illustrate changes in that society. Media products are crafted to suit an audience, and to attract this audience they must reflect the basic beliefs of the target market. If not, the market will not buy the product, whether it is a newspaper, a feature film or flavoured milk. Most mainstream media texts support society's dominant ideology and, as such, are a cleverly crafted amalgam of cosy familiarity and fantasy. Who hasn't at some stage wished that their mother were more like the advertising mums of TV land?

Texts that critique the dominant ideology of a society are less common, although they proliferate in times of social upheaval and uncertainty. Some even manage to simultaneously support some aspects of an ideology while challenging other aspects of it, especially where there is strong support for change. *Modern Family* demonstrates support for the American dream of prosperity and family. Mitch and Cam represent the growing acceptance of gay marriage as part of the dream, but their roles within the family represent that this acceptance can only be on traditional terms. On the other hand, that they live as a nuclear family in a nice house in the suburbs can be read as a snub to those who hold more traditional views. Contemporary texts are complex and rarely express one point of view.

Whose values are we socialised to?

To test the idea that values represented in media narratives are the product of society's underlying ideology, watch a TV comedy made for an audience from a different culture. It is very like viewing one from the 1950s – we know when to laugh because the laugh track tells us, but the narrative may not make sense to us.

Confirm the accuracy of your reading of the texts you are studying by comparing them with a range of material from different sources published around the same time. To judge 1950s America solely through *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955), directed by Nicholas Ray, would be very limiting indeed. Imagine if Australian family life were to be represented to future generations using *The Castle* (1997), directed by Rob Sitch. And we all know that the British secret service cannot be as glamorous and exciting as portrayed by James Bond. Yet embedded within the construction of each of these media texts are representations of values. James Dean represents the development of a youth culture in America in the 1950s. We laugh at the Kerrigans, but their caricatured lives reveal what is good about ordinary Australians. For all the swashbuckling macho action, it is possible to trace the development of the emancipation of women through their stereotypical representation in 007 movies. The construction

of values represented in media narratives points to support or criticism of the ideologies existing in the time and place of their production.

To understand the ideologies underpinning any culture, we need to look analytically at the media – to compare and contrast texts and to ask questions about audience and marketing. Widen your research from the texts themselves to other primary and secondary sources. Parents, grandparents, documentaries, histories and other products from the period can all contribute to the development of an understanding of the ideologies of the time.

Be wary of a superficial analysis that relies on a single text from the period alone. Some texts are satirical, which may not be apparent at first. Life in the 1950s and 1960s was not entirely as Wilma Flintstone and Carol Brady's exaggerated representations painted – these characters were actually an ironic satire on the changing ideologies around gender roles of the periods in which they were produced. Look at a range of texts from the period of production, such as ads and government publications. These will clarify your reading of the texts you are analysing.

Similarly, be very careful in your analysis if a text you are studying is set in a time or place that is different from the time and place in which it was made. *Gone with the Wind* (1939), directed by Victor Fleming, cannot be understood as a history of the American Civil War any more than *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962), directed by Robert Mulligan, could be claimed to be a historical recreation. *Father of the Bride* (1950), directed by Vincente Minnelli, is a more reliable guide to the values of family life in the 1950s (when it was both shot and set) than *Pleasantville* (1998), directed by Gary Ross, which represents the values of the 1990s. *MASH* (1970), directed by Robert Altman, was released at the height of the Vietnam war. Although set during the Korean war of the 1950s, the ideologies on which it was based were very much those of the anti-war movement of the 1970s.

The centrality of the family is a crucial defining characteristic of 1950s domestic melodrama.

Professor Thomas Elsaesser, University of Amsterdam

The media has long been used as a tool for propaganda. It is easy to see the ideology underpinning *The Triumph of the Will* (1935), directed by Leni Riefenstahl (see Figure 3.20 on page 89), and in the science-fiction films popular in the United States in the 1950s, where evil (communist) contagions too numerous to mention tried to corrupt innocent (democratic) communities. But what of propaganda today? Is *Zero Dark Thirty* (2012), directed by Kathryn Bigelow, propaganda as some have claimed? How would audiences know?

Propaganda and social engineering certainly exist in the media. The Pentagon has a long history of supporting the productions of films. It helped produce the first Academy Award Best Picture winner, *Wings*, in 1927. Today the Pentagon supplies military equipment and personnel and script editing services to Hollywood war films. Consumers, on the other hand, are intelligent and media executives are not usually agents of the state employed to bend the minds of an innocent and gullible public. The media and society work interdependently, reflecting each other's beliefs. One way to understand this relationship is using the communication theory of framing. The media and its audiences work together to frame media content (see page 360). We often criticise what we see in the media, but we still consume their products. The truth about ideology is not 'out there'; it is in our living rooms.



Figure 9.5 *To Kill a Mockingbird* represents the values of 1962 America.



Figure 9.6 *Pleasantville* (1998), directed by Gary Ross. They may look like they're from the 1950s, but they sure aren't acting like it.

NARRATIVES ARE PLEASURABLE

The thing about film, TV and radio narratives is that they are usually so easy to understand. Most audiences don't consider the hours of work that have gone into learning the codes and conventions of narrative construction. Watching a film is often described as fun, relaxing or even 'veging out'. The task doesn't seem difficult because we enjoy it – we engage with narratives and do so whenever we can.

The best way to study narratives is to consume them. As a Media student, you probably already do this. The more narratives you consume, the greater your knowledge and skills in understanding the codes and conventions of narrative structure will become, and the more we practise, the better we get and the easier narratives are to read. In the end, it is not that narratives are easy to understand, it is just that we have practised so long and hard. Now is the time to put all your practice to good use. It will still be work, but it will be fun!

Try narratives in different media: film, TV, radio, print, photography and online. If you are studying a particular genre, try to consume as many texts in the genre as possible. Compare this genre with texts in other genres. The more experience you have, the easier it will be to place your texts within the canon of the medium and genre from which they originate.

If you are studying film, get together with your classmates for video nights and trips to the cinema. Surf film sites, beginning at the Internet Movie Database. While you are there, download the production details for your texts. Read books about film, TV, radio, print and photography. In short, immerse yourself in narrative!

Film analysis enables us to recognize how the filmmakers have their magic on us, how all the constituent elements of the film have combined to create that magic. Rather than rob us of the pleasures of watching films, this approach affords us the even greater pleasure of deep engagement.

Jon Lewis, *Essential Cinema: An Introduction to Film Analysis*, 2013

In every form of art, you really want the experience of the images to transcend the medium, for the medium to disappear into the greater experience of viewing the work. So that you forget you're looking at a painting, or a photograph.

Bill Henson, photographer

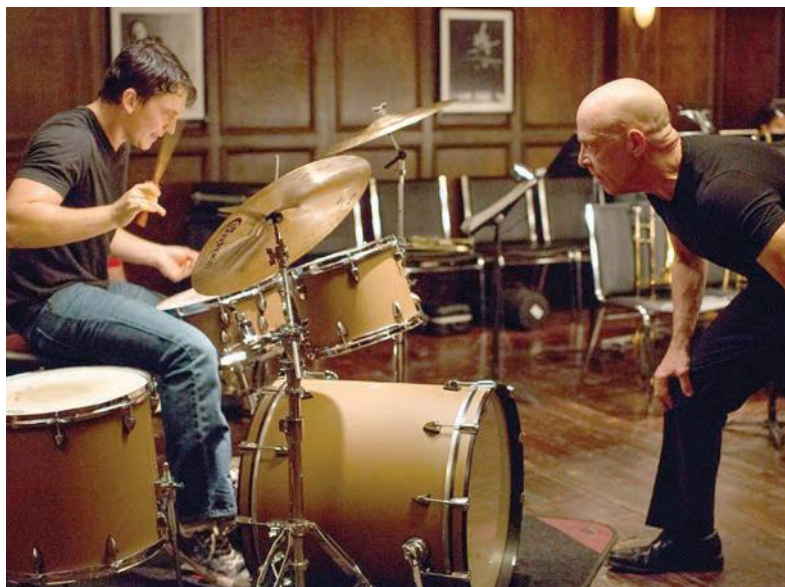


Figure 9.7 Practice makes perfect in *Whiplash* (2014), directed by Damien Chazelle.

A word of warning! Over the next few weeks, you will come to see narratives in a different light. You will analyse the way every aspect of a text is constructed. As a result, you will never see a film, watch TV or listen to a podcast, read a magazine or go to a gallery in the same way again! As the elements of construction become evident, you may become frustrated and worry that the magic has gone! Do not despair. When this happens, you should be reassured that your learning is half complete. When you can recognise, analyse and appreciate these elements, and at the same time suspend disbelief, enjoy a narrative and read the ideologies on which it is based, you will know that you are officially a media buff. Good luck!

If you are making a script based on a book it can be frustrating going back to the source novel, because you're turning the story into a totally different thing; the narrative of film is different from that of a book.

Clive Owen, actor

Activity 9.2 You've seen the film, now write the book

Everyone has a favourite film or two. Choose one of yours and think about the opening. Now write this opening as it might appear in a novel. Remember, the first page of a book serves a similar purpose to that of a film – it must engage its audience sufficiently to make them want to turn the page and to embark on the narrative journey as it unfolds. Your first page should convey all the aspects of the film opening that are conveyed visually and through sound. Can you engage your audience using words alone?

Read your opening to your classmates and see if they can guess which film you are adapting.

Now think about those aspects of the narrative that were difficult to write. It is likely that they were the cinematic elements that are particular to the medium of film. How did you cope with them?

Activity 9.3 Which is best, film or book? You decide

One way to consider the differences between different media forms is to debate them.

- 1 Research and debate the topic: 'If a film comes first, it is better than the book. If the book came first, it is better than the film.'
- 2 Now write a report that details what you have learnt about the difference between the way narrative is constructed for novels and films.

Journalism allows its readers to witness history; fiction gives its readers an opportunity to live it.

John Hersey, writer and journalist

PRACTICAL TIP

The study of narrative has a language all of its own. Use the glossary to help you learn the terms.

THE FUNCTION OF NARRATIVE IN SOCIETY

Having established that narratives have existed since the beginning of humanity and that audiences love narratives, the question that must be asked is why? What functions do narratives perform in society?

Activity 9.4 So what is the point of narrative?

In small groups, discuss the function of narrative in all its forms in society. What does narrative tell us about ourselves, our society and the world?

Create a poster that outlines the most important points your group came up with.

ON 'READING' YOUR TEXTS

The **reception context** is the term used to describe the circumstances in which a text is consumed. This includes the physical location, method and quality of broadcast or reproduction, reasons for consuming the text, the impact of other audience members on the consumption of a text, and the sociopolitical ideologies of the society in which a text is consumed. A narrative may reflect the ideologies of the society in which it was made or those in which it is consumed, or a disconnect between these ideologies and societies may be evident. This will affect an audience's reading of a text. An obvious example is the representation of North Korea in Seth Rogen and Evan Goldberg's comedy *The Interview* (2014). The North Koreans were not amused, but US audiences loved it.

Most students will consume their texts in the classroom or on a computer screen. This is not what the creators of the text had in mind. The reception context alters the experience of a text, and therefore how an audience reads and responds to it. If possible, you should try to consume your texts at least once in the manner the director intended. If you are studying films, this means a trip to the cinema. If you are studying TV narratives, try to view them in a normal living room with – if the production was first screened on a commercial station – ads. Radio narratives and podcasts should be listened to alone, perhaps while engaged in another task, such as travelling. If possible, consume print texts or photographs in their original form.

It is a good idea to purchase a copy of each of the texts you are studying. You will need to refer to them many times while working on this area of study and when preparing for the November exam.

The suspension of disbelief

The **suspension of disbelief** is the emotional and psychological state that audiences allow themselves to enter in which they are happy to believe the unbelievable in order to engage with the world (diegesis) of the narrative journey as presented to them. Most audiences willingly suspend disbelief when they consume a narrative in any form. To devote time, money and emotional energy on a text means that an audience has an investment in wanting the narrative to work. When we embark on a narrative journey, we want to suspend disbelief. There is nothing more disappointing than sitting in a darkened cinema or standing in a gallery thinking: 'That's so fake. It would never happen.'

In a post-apocalyptic world, warrior Imperator Furiosa leads a daring escape from the fortress of the Citadel. She and Max Rockatansky try to outrun warlord Immortan Joe and his henchmen in a deadly high-speed chase through the Wasteland. Why let a little thing like reality get in the way of a great story! Go ahead, suspend disbelief and enjoy yourself!

Alamy Stock Photo/Collection Christopher



Figure 9.8 *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015), directed by George Miller

Diegesis

PRACTICAL TIP

If you are a film buff, you will love film theorist and critic David Bordwell's website.



WebLink

In fictional narratives, **diegesis** is the term used to describe the world of a narrative. Everything that would 'naturally' appear in this storyworld – including places, characters and sounds – is diegetic. Non-diegetic elements are those that are 'added' by the director, such as narration, musical soundtracks, titles and special effects.

To determine whether something in a narrative is diegetic or non-diegetic, ask yourself: Would the characters be able to see, hear, know or understand it as part of their world? If the answer is yes, then the feature is part of the text's diegesis. For example, when characters can hear the music in the soundtrack because it comes from a band or a radio in their world, then it is diegetic; if they cannot, then it is non-diegetic.

Activity 9.5 Your narrative journey

Start a journal or blog in which you record the narratives you consume. Don't just stick to the medium you are studying, but make notes about every narrative. Not sure if something is a narrative? Ask yourself: Is it a story? Does it fit the definition on page 10? If it does, it is a narrative. After a time, you will begin to find the narrative form in the strangest places.

Try some of these:

- films
- animations
- games
- galleries
- TV programs
- books
- ads
- your classroom
- DVDs
- magazines
- newspapers
- menus
- cartoons
- online
- theatre
- life.

Whenever and wherever you encounter a narrative, jot it down. Try to look for similarities in storylines, characters and patterns of narrative construction. Your notes don't have to be detailed, but they will form an invaluable resource, especially if you are planning a narrative for your production this year.

Filmmakers on film

A film is – or should be – more like music than like fiction. It should be a progression of moods and feelings. The theme, what's behind the emotion, the meaning, all that comes later.

Stanley Kubrick

Film as dream, film as music. No art passes our conscience in the way film does, and goes directly to our feelings, deep down into the dark rooms of our souls.

Ingmar Bergman

I like a film to have a beginning, a middle and an end, but not necessarily in that order.

Jean-Luc Godard

There are no rules in filmmaking. Only sins. And the cardinal sin is dullness.

Frank Capra

For me, filmmaking combines everything. That's the reason I've made cinema my life's work. In films, painting and literature, theatre and music come together. But a film is still a film.

Akira Kurosawa

I steal from every movie ever made.

Quentin Tarantino

We all steal, but if we're smart we steal from great directors. Then, we can call it influence.

Krzysztof Kieslowski

Cinema that interests me is cinema about openings, unresolved questions and experiments; cinema that explores the possibilities offered by narrative and by associations, without refusing chaos, chance, destiny or the unexpected.

Tom Tykwer





So we thought, let's look back to a cinematic language where the audience participated in the form. Where they were aware at all times that they were watching a movie, and that they should be active in their experience and not passive.

Baz Luhrmann

One of the things you do as a writer and as a filmmaker is grasp for resonant symbols and imagery without necessarily fully understanding it yourself.

Christopher Nolan

I don't think it's the job of filmmakers to give anybody answers. I do think, though, that a good film makes you ask questions of yourself as you leave the theatre.

Paul Haggis

My cinema is an extension of myself. A sort of life-testimony of my vital experience, with my few virtues and my numerous limitations.

Alejandro González Iñárritu

There's no story if there isn't some conflict. The memorable things are usually not how pulled together everybody is. I think everybody feels lonely and trapped sometimes. I would think it's more or less the norm.

Wes Anderson

Activity 9.6 Who are these directors and what gives them the right to speak about film?

- 1 Search out the films of the directors quoted above. Research their work and, over the next few weeks, choose at least one film from each director to watch. Some you will enjoy, others will be harder to appreciate. Try to learn at least one thing about filmmaking from each director.
- 2 Prepare a short illustrated oral presentation on one director for your class.

Activity 9.7 What did the directors of your texts have in mind and what do you think?

Your teacher will have selected the texts you are studying. Now you know what the filmmakers quoted above think about filmmaking, it is time to discover what you think.

- 1 Research the directors of the texts you are studying. Examine their filmographies, and any material published about their filmmaking and the texts you are studying. Do you agree with their thoughts?
- 2 Write a brief report on your research.

Modern cinema is a code.

Gus Van Sant, film director

NARRATIVES ARE SYSTEMS THAT STRUCTURE MEANING

All types of art have a form that is particular to their **medium** and purpose. Narratives are no exception. Each is an organised system of elements in the form of media codes and conventions that together suggest meaning. Narratives are constructed from the elements appropriate to the medium in which they are produced.

When we think of a narrative text, we first think of the content of that text, of stories and what happens on screen or page, in the frame or in the broadcast. When you and your friends discuss last night's TV, you are likely to talk about who did what and how that affected you. In such informal chat, we rarely discuss the construction of a narrative, yet construction is as important to your viewing enjoyment as the action on screen.

For most of the time, the codes and conventions of narrative form are invisible – they exist simply to carry the storyline and only come to the notice of an audience when they stand out because the director draws attention to them, or because they are poorly constructed. Yet it is the very process of construction, the way codes and conventions combine, that is at the heart of audience understanding and engagement with narrative. Indeed, it is narrative form that instructs audiences how to read a text.

Audiences read texts differently

Audiences infer meaning as they decode the codes and conventions presented in a narrative in a largely unconscious way. While there will be broad agreement about its meaning, each audience member brings their own experience and understanding to their reading of a narrative. Thus, there can be as many readings of the texts you are studying as there are students in your class, each slightly different but all valid.

Audiences decode texts both logically and emotionally; both interact with each other. One person may laugh and another may cry in response to a particular scene, because each viewer brings a different background to their reading of a text. Take these reviews of *La La Land* (2016), directed by Damien Chazelle, as an example:

La La Land is a movie for now that belongs to the ages. A musical romance whose song and dance routines soar and swing so that they burst with a ready, real emotion. Damien Chazelle's film is a celebration of filmmaking that fittingly turns on the struggles of artists. The direction is dazzling but never oppressive – there's an upswing of the fantastic which is liberating. 'Here's to the fools who dream,' declares one song, and that's a perfect encapsulation of this wonderful experience.

Craig Mathieson, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 January 2017

Launched on Boxing Day, La La Land came pre-packaged with hype and acclaim for its inventive take on musicals – which is exactly its problem. It's a song-and-dance movie that's so 'innovative' it features leads who can't really sing or dance. The film stars Ryan Gosling as Sebastian (an aspiring jazz musician) and Emma Stone as Mia (an aspiring actor) who are struggling to achieve their dreams in Los Angeles. But, as a friend pointed out, 'The film is as flat as Ryan Gosling's feet'.

While Ryan Gosling and Emma Stone are so charming they could make a tax instruction video watchable, La La Land would have been better cast with actors who could properly sing (like Anna Kendrick) or dance (like Joseph Gordon-Levitt) – or better still, a triple-threat such as Justin Timberlake.

Le Lam Tran, *The Age*, 7 January 2017

Were these two reviewers, both from Fairfax Media, watching the same film? Clearly, they both brought different experiences and expectations to their viewing, which resulted in very different readings of the film.

Storytelling is storytelling. You still play by the same narrative rules.

James Cameron, film director

Narratives are constructed

Like all media texts, narratives are structured using technical, written and symbolic codes and conventions that construct or suggest meaning. Narratives share many of these codes and conventions with other art and media forms and so are familiar to audiences. 'Once upon a time ...' and 'In a galaxy far far away ...' are both conventional ways to begin a narrative. Audiences recognise this convention and expect to be taken on an journey.

Technical codes and conventions refer to those codes used to structure a narrative to suggest meaning, such as the use of camera angles, framing or editing. Symbolic codes and conventions refer to those that suggest meaning other than the literal, such as the use of objects, characters, locations or colour to suggest an idea and develop the narrative. Codes and conventions can be both technical and symbolic, such as the use of shadow to suggest a character is two-sided or the use of big print in titles to structure the hierarchy of information.

When analysing narratives, media scholars study codes and conventions alone and independently of each other and, more importantly, in terms of their interdependence, how they work together. One way to do this is to think of a narrative as a kind of equation where each element works with others to suggest meaning.

The narrative equation

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{Codes and conventions} \\ \text{related to story} \end{array} + \begin{array}{l} \text{Codes and conventions} \\ \text{related to production} \end{array} + \begin{array}{l} \text{Factors that impact on} \\ \text{audience readings} \end{array} = \text{NARRATIVE}$$

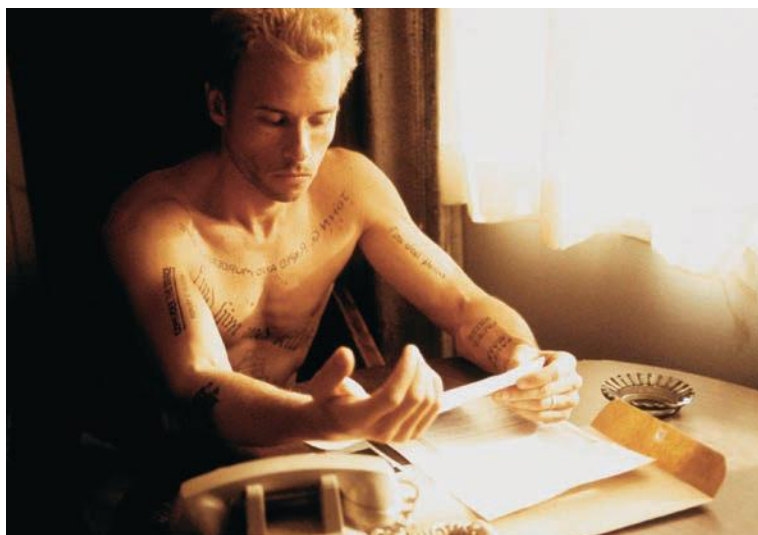


Figure 9.9 *Memento* (2000), directed by Christopher Nolan. Each aspect of the narrative equation works interdependently with the others to construct the narrative.

In media, the term ‘narrative’ is understood to include the story, how the story is constructed and the relationship between the text and its audience. As in all equations, each aspect of the narrative equation is important and is balanced by the others. Therefore, it is important to think about narrative codes and conventions both individually and in conjunction with one another.

Adding up the narrative equation

In your workbook, create a table listing the codes and conventions that make up the narrative equation. Add to this list as you discover new ones. When you understand how each works, tick it off.

A list of common codes and conventions appears on page 12 in Chapter 1. As you explore your narratives, you will add to it. Think of each of the terms as a heading under which a number of subheadings will emerge as you develop your knowledge of how codes and conventions structure narratives.

Narrative structures

Narratives are about conflict, problem-solving and growth. Every story needs a trigger to begin the narrative journey. By disturbing the status quo, the narrative trigger creates impetus for the narrative – it provides character motivation and sets in train a range of directions in which the narrative might develop; these are termed ‘narrative possibilities’.

Narratives are understood to begin in a state of narrative **equilibrium**. This equilibrium should not necessarily be equated with harmony, but refers to the opening of the narrative at the point at which the audience is invited on the narrative journey. Indeed, many narratives begin in a state of disharmony and end with resolution but not necessarily harmony, especially if the way is left open for a sequel. TV narratives often end in crisis, as story or character arcs may span many episodes. Non-fictional and photographic narratives may end with an implied question: what are you as the audience going to do now? Some texts invite the audience to contribute to the narrative through the contribution of their own life experience to the story. For simplicity, the diagrams below begin and end with equilibrium, but it is important to understand that not all narratives employ such structures.

The most common narrative form is the **linear narrative**, in which the narrative runs chronologically – events occur in the order in which characters experience them. A famous example of this structure is Alfred Hitchcock’s *Psycho* (1960).

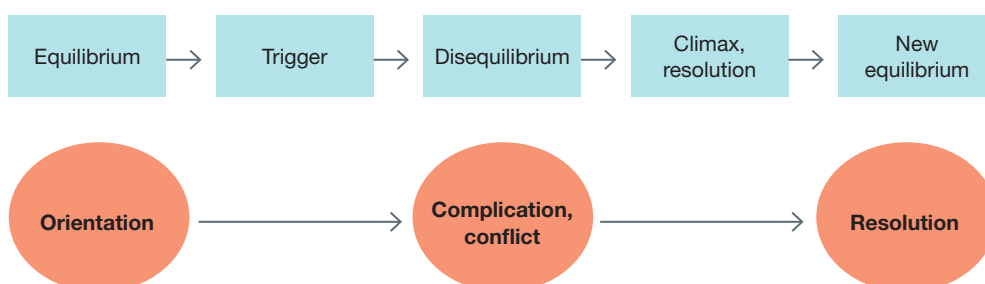


Figure 9.10 Linear narrative

If you don't have the story and the unfolding of the trajectory of the saga, it's like getting in a car and not having any gas.

Gus Van Sant

Another popular structure is the **circular narrative**, where the action begins and ends at the same point, or where plot points are repeated. This occurs in *Run Lola Run* (1998), directed by Tom Tykwer. A variation of the circular narrative is the **flashback**, where the narrative begins at the climax and then backtracks to develop the plot, which leads to the climax again. A good example is *Moulin Rouge!* (2001), directed by Baz Luhrmann.

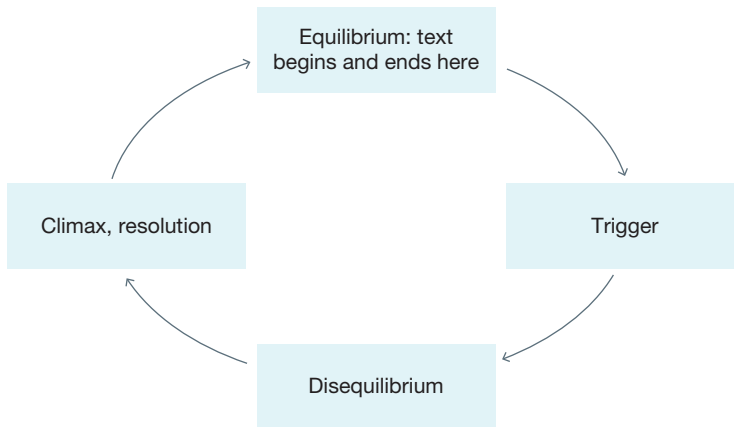


Figure 9.11 Circular narrative

Flash forward and even the reverse telling of events, as in Christopher Nolan's *Memento* (2000), are also popular methods of structuring story time. Occasionally, narratives are structured seemingly randomly or in a **non-linear** manner, but as each scene unfolds, the audience gradually orders events, as in *21 Grams* (2003), directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu.

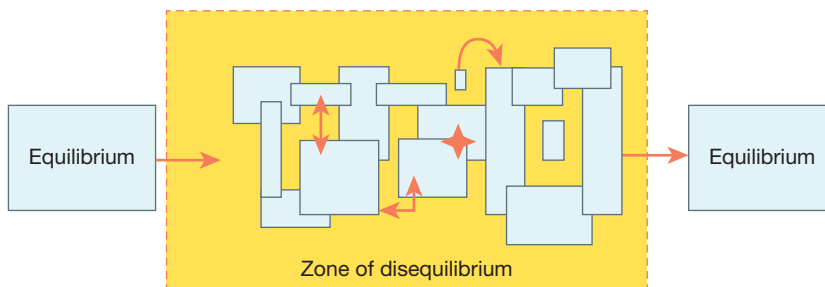


Figure 9.12 Non-linear narrative

My idea in terms of managing a narrative, or in thinking in my creative life, is that you could easily argue that the past, the present and the future all occur simultaneously, and if you can postulate that, then you're not strictly bound to a linear narrative.

Tommy Lee Jones, film director

I always say that photography's closest cousin is poetry because of the way it sparks your imagination and leaves gaps for the viewer to fill in.

Alec Soth, photographer

Activity 9.8 Plot the narrative structure of your texts

In your workbook, draw a diagram of the narrative structure of the texts you are studying. As you learn more about the narrative, add details to your diagram. You may like to affix each element using a separate sheet of tracing paper – this will help you see the increasing layers of complexity that construct modern narratives.



Figure 9.13 *The Dressmaker* (2015), directed by Jocelyn Moorhouse, uses a classical narrative structure.

CLASSICAL NARRATIVE CINEMA

One system of narrative structure has dominated Western cinema from the 1930s until today, where elements of it are evident in mainstream narratives. It is called **classical narrative cinema** or ‘classical Hollywood cinema’ because of the enduring influence of the US studio system on film production from the 1930s to the 1950s.

This narrative form is based on the actions and motivation of individual characters, and works on the equilibrium → disequilibrium → equilibrium model. It is based on a three-act structure:

- Act I: Equilibrium – approximately the first quarter of the film

Introduction of characters, including the protagonist and antagonist, goals and motivation and possible obstacles are established, the main conflict is outlined.

- Act II: Disruption – rising action – approximately the middle half of the film
Plot complications and obstacles to character goals are added, urgency rises, there may be a false resolution.
- Act III: Resolution and **denouement** – equilibrium is re-established – final quarter of the film
The conflict comes to a climax, the **protagonist** and **antagonist** confront each other for supremacy. The protagonist is victorious and conflicts, issues or ideas are resolved. The protagonist has developed as a result of the journey and the world has changed for the better.

Classical narrative cinema is character-based, where events in cause-and-effect relationships establish character motivation. Characters and events are divided in **binary opposition**, such as good versus evil, love versus hate or intelligence versus stupidity. Audiences are positioned to support particular characters. Every text in this style ends with closure, where problems are resolved and a clear message that reinforces the dominant ideology of the film is conveyed to the audience.

Story and production codes and conventions, such as shot selection and **continuity editing**, **naturalise** the structure of narrative to suggest a sense of realism, even where characters are not human, as is the case in animations or superhero films.

This narrative structure is so common that audiences perceive it as ‘natural’ and based on ‘common sense’, but when laid out here it is obvious that classical narrative cinema is highly structured. Think about narratives that you love. Many are likely to comprise the set of codes and conventions outlined above, with a similar resolution. The names and places may change but, in classical narrative cinema, the plot structure does not.

Alternative narrative structures

Texts that employ alternative structures are quite uncommon in popular media and are often the provenance of art-house cinemas, film festivals and galleries. They rarely rate well – not because they are of lesser quality, but because the commercial world of film production and marketing favours familiar stories, and it is the familiar that fills megaplex cinemas. The industry gives the audience what the audience wants, and the audience wants what it knows.

Alternative narratives might include an episodic or chapter-like structure, unexplained digressions or tangents and abrupt or ambiguous endings. Rather than encouraging audiences to identify with characters, alternative narratives may deliberately ‘distance’ the audience. They may not differentiate protagonists, preferring a large number of equally important characters whose motivations may not be explained. Alternative narratives are likely to break the cinematic conventions audiences have come to expect. As a result, they may require more work to decode the codes and conventions used to construct them.

Alternative narrative forms commonly arise out of cultures different from our own. That is, they appear alternative to us, but not in their country of origin. On the other hand, such films may be a reaction to the dominant narrative structures in filmmaking at the time of production. Thus French new wave or German expressionism can be understood as part of the history of European filmmaking.

Many Asian filmmakers have a number of different approaches to narrative, of which the martial arts films we see form only a part. Look out for Asian films at art-house cinemas and online.

What narratives have you seen that are not based on classical Hollywood cinema patterns? Ask your teacher for a list of recommendations, or perhaps you would like to try these:

- *21 Grams* (2003), directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu
- *Donnie Darko* (2001), directed by Richard Kelly
- *Short Cuts* (1993), directed by Robert Altman
- *Memento* (2000), directed by Christopher Nolan
- *The Blair Witch Project* (1999), directed by Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sánchez
- *American Beauty* (1999), directed by Sam Mendes
- *Noise* (2007), directed by Matthew Saville
- *500 Days of Summer* (2009), directed by Marc Webb.

I think audiences get too comfortable and familiar in today's movies. They believe everything they're hearing and seeing. I like to shake that up.

Christopher Nolan, film director

Auteur theory

Who is the author of a narrative text? In whose hands does the responsibility for what we see and hear belong? Who is entitled to determine the meaning of a text? These are the questions that auteur theory attempts to address.

Although first used in Europe in the early part of the 20th century, by the 1950s the meaning of the term 'auteur' came to be understood as the author of a film, usually the director, and refers to the style of a film by that director. Plot, screenplay, themes, mise en scène and production processes may all carry a director's particular style. Famous auteurs include Alfred Hitchcock, Quentin Tarantino and Wes Anderson. The debate about whether auteur theory was a useful way to understand films lasted for over 30 years, until the concept settled as just one of a number of film theories, all of which are now considered useful in their own ways.



Alamy Stock Photo/AF archive

Figure 9.14 Edgar Wright, director of *Shaun of the Dead* (2004) is considered an auteur. His films are highly stylistically recognisable.

One problem with auteur theory was the way it can be used to differentiate 'good' directors (and films) from 'bad' ones. The notion of worthy and unworthy films reinforced the existing divide between **high culture** and low or **popular culture**, and ignored the social, industrial and commercial context in which filmmaking exists. It also allows less opportunity for an audience to make meanings of texts for themselves and ignores two of the important aspects of the narrative experience: audience reception and the pleasure of audience expectation.

Filmmaking is a complex business, and while certain directors are associated with a particular style, to credit them as the sole auteur of a film is to deny the many contributions made by dedicated professionals who devote years to their specialist art. Screenwriters, vision, sound and costume designers, lighting experts, actors and editors are among the long list of those who contribute to the style of a film.

Activity 9.9 Something completely different

Select and view a narrative text that uses a different narrative structure from the ones you are studying. Try to choose one that is made for a similar audience and shares similar production values.

Note the differences in the storyline and in the way the narrative is constructed. Which is the more effective narrative? Why?

Prepare a short illustrated oral presentation for your class.

I'm a yarn teller. My job is to engage you as much as I can and as often as I can.

Ridley Scott, film director

THE ROLE OF STORY IN CONSTRUCTING NARRATIVES

The difference between story and plot

While the terms 'story' and 'plot' are often used interchangeably, it is important to consider the differences between them.

- The story includes all the events of the narrative – those made known to the audience, and those inferred but not necessarily revealed.
- The plot comprises only those events in a narrative text that are revealed to the audience, including any added non-diegetic material such as special effects.

Alamy Stock Photo/Pictorial Press Ltd



Figure 9.15 The plot of *Animal Kingdom* (2010) revolves around Josh, Grandma Smurf and her family, but the little we know about Josh's backstory informs our reading of the plot.

In *Animal Kingdom* (2010), directed by David Michôd, the story encompasses all aspects of the protagonist's life. As the film opens, Josh is living with his mother, who is estranged from her family and dies in the first scene. The circumstances of Josh's life and the reason for the estrangement form part of the multiple storylines interwoven throughout the film. They are alluded to but not developed by the plot. Josh goes to live with Grandma Smurf and learns about his extended family's life of crime.

The plot of *Animal Kingdom* depicts Josh's struggle to overcome his grief and his journey into adulthood. Several narrative possibilities are developed, including a struggle between good and evil and a love interest. The film's closure sees these plotlines resolved and the audience is positioned to infer Josh's future story as one of control over his life journey.

Activity 9.10 Story and plot

- 1 For each of the texts you are studying, write a plot synopsis.
- 2 Now write a list of the important aspects of the story that are not included in the plot but contribute to an audience's understanding of the narrative. It may help to lay your page out in two columns with the following headings:

Plot synopsis	Story elements that are assumed by the audience

Multiple storylines

Most narratives comprise multiple storylines or **story arcs**. These storylines may run parallel to, comment on, or intersect with the main storyline. They are designed to add depth and colour to the narrative by complicating the lives of characters, adding to the range of narrative possibilities, illustrating a moral dilemma, providing a red herring or false lead, contrasting characters, situations or ideas or to provide relief as a counterpoint to a distressing plot. Multiple storylines usually intersect the main plot at some point or points during the narrative. Occasionally they do not, but the actions and characters in each contribute to our understanding of the plot and themes in a text. This technique is termed **parallelism** and is a feature of the structure of *The Social Network* (2010), directed by David Fincher.

Multiple storylines allow for the development of **allegory** and **metaphor**. This is evident, for example, in 'journey' or 'rite of passage' films, where the protagonist's physical journey mirrors a symbolic one of personal growth. In Cameron Crowe's *Almost Famous* (2000), William embarks on a road trip with rock-and-roll band Stillwater, with the aim of writing an article for *Rolling Stone* magazine. This plotline fades in importance, however, when considered against the obstacles that William encounters in his journey to adulthood and reconciliation.

Journey films may not always be a physical journey. The characters in *The Breakfast Club* (1985), directed by John Hughes, travel only as far as the school library; it is their personal journey that is the focus of the multiple storylines of the film.

In *School of Rock* (2003), directed by Richard Linklater, a down-and-out rocker, Dewey Finn, thinks he is on a journey to easy money and fame, but over the course of 108 minutes finds that, classically, he has learnt a great deal more about the important things in life. The plot uses multiple storylines in the form of Dewey's students, colleagues and friends to help him find his way. This film combines comedy with music to add complexity to a tried and true storyline, creating wide audience appeal. For more on the hero's journey, see page 254.

Activity 9.11 Illustrating story arcs

In your workbook, create a graph for each of your texts that illustrates the arcs of the multiple storylines. The x-axis represents the level of intensity of the plot; the y-axis represents the elapsed time.

Note how the story arcs overlap each other at significant points in the narrative.



Openings

When and how does a narrative begin? Film narratives begin when the lights dim and the production company symbol is projected. Commercial TV narratives commence when the last ad ends. Audio narratives begin in the moment of silence that precedes the first sound. Print and photography narratives begin with the turning of a page, entry to a gallery or click of a mouse.

Beginnings of movies have got to be way above sensational. You have to establish style, that's the most important thing.

Jill Bilcock, film editor

The beginning of a narrative is a moment of profound importance. The director, the producer, the cast and crew, and the expectant audience have all invested a great deal of energy, money and hope in this moment. It is one of promise: what will unfold?

Almost Famous (2000), directed by Cameron Crowe, begins with a black screen and the sound of a stylus hitting a record. This moment sets the tone for the entire film, but if you are settling on the couch, you will miss it. Baz Luhrmann chose to use a reference to theatrical musicals by beginning *Moulin Rouge!* (2001) with a red curtain and an overture. Again, the tone is set. Sometimes a director chooses to confound audience expectation and set a mood of confusion. For *The Darjeeling Limited* (2007), Wes Anderson begins with a short film set in Paris. The audience is unsettled – they are expecting a story set in India. When *Hotel Chevalier* concludes, the screen is, for the second time in a few minutes, filled with the familiar Fox Searchlight title sequence.



Alamy Stock Photo/AF archive

Figure 9.16 Wes Anderson confounded audience expectation by beginning *The Darjeeling Limited* with the short film *Hotel Chevalier*.

Openings are designed to prime audience expectation as the narrative begins. Make a point of concentrating on the beginning of all narratives you consume. Collect ideas that you might use in your own productions.

Narrative openings may include title sequences, sound cues, establishment shots, exposition, explanatory shots or scenes, voice-overs, text or summaries of what has gone before ('previously on ...'); the variations are endless. Narratives may begin in the middle of the action, or at the start of it; occasionally they begin with the climax. What all openings have in common is the need to engage an audience, to hook them in and invite them on the narrative journey.

A film does not just start, it begins.

David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction*, 2013

NARRATIVE POSSIBILITIES

Openings establish some or all of the following: time, place, setting, mood, character, style, genre and the values on which the text is based. At the conclusion of an opening, a range of narrative possibilities have been established. The creator wants the audience to be asking questions. Why are we in this location? What is that sound? Why am I feeling anxious? How will the narrative develop? What will happen? What part will these characters play? How might it all resolve? Creators hope that the opening engages the audience sufficiently for them to suspend disbelief, to care about the plot and its characters, and to embark on the narrative journey with them. To encourage this, they often foreshadow ideas, themes and events that will occur later in the story. Audiences may not be aware of this until they come across them later in the narrative.

The title sequence is an important part of film and TV narratives. At the conclusion of a title sequence, even a very short one, the audience knows a great deal about the narrative. Some title sequences are extensive; for example, the title sequence for *The Shining* (1980), directed by Stanley Kubrick, reveals much about the isolated location and supernatural themes of this film. Other title sequences, such as that for Wes Craven's *Scream* (1996), are exceptionally brief yet still pack a punch. This sequence is designed as a momentary shock to grab an audience's attention. Although they do not yet know it, audiences of *The Dressmaker* are introduced to every main character, the protagonist's backstory and character motivation in the title sequence.

The timing and duration of a title sequence can be as important as its content. Television credits often continue for many minutes during the scenes before the first set of advertisements.

Activity 9.12 Just for starters

- 1 Write detailed notes about the opening sequences of the texts you are studying under these headings:
 - a The point in the narrative at which the text begins and ends, and the significance of this timing
 - b What we see, including visual composition, text, typography, colour
 - c What we hear, including music, special effects, dialogue
 - d **Motifs** and themes that are established
 - e Effect of the opening on audience understanding and expectation of the narrative.
- 2 Show the opening to test audiences who have not seen the text, and ask them to make predictions about the narrative based on the information provided. Are their predictions accurate?

A question many students ask is: When does the opening end? In some texts, the conclusion of the opening is clear; in others, it is a matter of debate. Some openings include the first few shots or scenes, while others conclude at the end of the title sequence. The exact moment is not as important as what the opening has achieved: if characters and a range of narrative possibilities have been introduced but not developed or resolved, then the opening has concluded. For your texts, decide when you think the opening ends and make notes about the reasons for your decision.

Themes

I suppose all of my films have a common theme. If I think about it, though, the only theme I can think of is really a question: Why can't people be happier together?

Akira Kurosawa, film director

Not to be confused with musical themes (see page 279), narratives are structured around themes or major ideas that the creator wishes to explore. A theme is a values statement that motivates or shapes a narrative. Themes usually comment on an aspect of society and may or may not be directly related to the plot. Themes point to the ideology behind a text. *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* (1967), directed by Stanley Kramer, is centred around the theme of racial acceptance, with most aspects of the plot dealing with this theme. *The Last Samurai* (2003), directed Edward Zwick, although set many years ago, has an underlying commentary on contemporary US foreign policy as one of its themes. Michael Patrick King's *Sex and the City* (2008), like the TV series on which it is based, is about the enduring power of love and friendship.

Themes can be identified in every aspect of a text, including dialogue. In the following excerpt from *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962), directed by Robert Mulligan, protagonist Atticus Finch clearly expresses the theme of racial equality. The underlying ideology of the film, that all men are created equal, is evident.

'If you just learn a single trick, Scout, you'll get along a lot better with all kinds of folks. You never really understand a person until you can consider things from his point of view ... until you climb inside his skin and walk around in it.'

Themes are constructed through the selection and use of codes and conventions. The fight between good and evil may be represented by an attractive good guy contrasted with a baddie who is ugly or dirty. Colour may be used to establish themes, as occurs in *Gattaca* (1997), directed by Andrew Niccol, where interiors are cast in cold bluish light and exteriors have a yellow colour cast, to represent its twin themes of isolation and the dangers of science run amok.

Creators may not explicitly think of themes and ideology when producing a narrative. They are, of course, a product of the society in which the narrative is being made and so themes emerge from this lived experience. Wes Anderson, known as a highly controlling filmmaker, understands that the director is not able to control everything on the screen and must let meaning come to life.

I think, often, what ends up being important in a movie thematically, or what it ends up being really about, is usually not what you're focusing on. You're focusing on what a certain character is going to say, what this character wants from this other character, how they feel, and how she's going to express what she wants, and what's going to happen, you know? And as with everything else in life or writing or filmmaking, you don't really control what it means – my instinct is that I don't want to control it, because it's better if it just comes to life, in whatever way that can happen. And everything else, everything feels like it has to be created for one of these movies, so I'd rather have the meanings come out of the life of it, rather than wanting to demonstrate a certain theme, or communicate a certain theory.

Wes Anderson, in Matt Zoller Seitz (author), Michael Chabon, *The Wes Anderson Collection*, Abrams Books, 2013

Directors often reinforce themes in their film or TV narratives through the use of musical elements. Audiences come to associate musical phrases, themes or **leitmotifs** with particular characters or situations, enabling them to predict what will happen when the music reappears, based partly on their (usually unconscious) reading of the musical theme.

Themes may make intertextual references. The familiar tune of 'Somewhere over the Rainbow' drifts through Baz Luhrmann's *Australia* (2008), bringing with it all of the associations audiences made in its original context in the *Wizard of Oz* (1939), directed by Victor Fleming and George Cukor. In both texts, the theme that there's no place like home is evident.



Figure 9.17 Watching *Mad Max* films can reveal much about changing themes and ideologies.

Sometimes film reboots can reveal changes in society's ideologies through their treatment of themes. The original *Mad Max* (1979), directed by George Miller, was, in part, a commentary on the oil crisis of the time, while in *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015) it is the environment and the importance of water. Of course, texts are not usually based on one theme, for example. Through the *Mad Max* franchise we can also see the development of the role of women in society. The concerns, values and ideologies of society have changed over the 25 plus years between both narratives. Beliefs about gender have shifted, and this is reflected in the films.

Character

In modern narratives, the role of character is usually to cause the action rather than react to it, as was the case in Greek theatre. It is important that the audience relate to characters, to care about them and understand why they behave as they do.

There are four aspects to the study of character:

- establishment
- development
- motivation
- relationships.

Character establishment, development and motivation are all aspects of narrative possibility. Audiences bring both experience and expectation to their reading of characters, and it is the role of the director to reward this experience and develop expectations – not doing so would render texts clichéd and repetitive. Audiences need a reason for continuing to engage with a narrative. Characters must therefore be created and developed as an amalgam of familiar types and character traits, with new features to intrigue an audience and encourage them to speculate on how the character and narrative will play out.

I tried to think up characters who might represent things we all share, that seem vaguely 'normal'. Obviously, I tried to resist a caricatured or a clichéd version of normal, but the kind of normal that as many people as possible could relate to ... I guess I think of myself as being fairly typical, so when I experience something more than once, or something happens in my own life or to my friends, or what I hear people talking about around me, I assume it's likely to be stuff we all share.

Sarah Watt, director of *My Year Without Sex* (2009)



Hibiscus Films

Figure 9.18 *My Year Without Sex*. Characters are created and developed as an amalgam of familiar types and traits. New features engage an audience.

Character establishment

Codes and conventions related to story and production work together with audience expectation to bring characters to life. Directors select from a rich palette of techniques to establish character. Those early moments are very important – audiences can be fickle and form opinions in seconds. How does the audience first encounter a character? Does the camera linger? If so, this character is likely to be significant. What is the character doing? What does the lighting suggest? Where is the character placed within the frame? Codes and conventions such as setting, costume and props provide clues to the establishment of character. Dialogue, music and sound effects may also build understanding. Occasionally we hear a character before we see them; characters can be established through voice-over.

During the opening of a narrative, it is common to establish several characters, each with different traits and motivations. The audience reads the codes and conventions provided to determine who is or are the protagonists. This may take some time, and the narrative possibilities thus created are a device that engages the audience in narrative development.

In many narratives, characters are established as stock or common characters. This is particularly the case in genre texts. Audiences recognise character types: the good guy, the loner, the femme fatale, the innocent abroad, the geek. Stock characters assume that the audience has some pre-existing knowledge and experience of this character type. Directors use this knowledge to cut straight to the plot without having to develop each character in detail.

Directors position audiences to relate to characters in a particular way. This occurs even before the film begins, when an actor is cast for a part. Audiences have pre-existing expectations of famous actors, which they bring with them to the cinema-going experience. Think about Cate Blanchett, Owen Wilson or Jim Carrey – each contributes part of their persona as an actor to the films in which they appear.

All of us want something in life, all of us have flaws, and all of us have strengths. So, I always try to discover those things in a character and then try to expose it in one way or another.

Alejandro González Iñárritu

Activity 9.13 Meet the characters

Create a page for each of the characters in your texts. Remember, main characters are important, but lesser ones should be noted too – they add complexity and through their actions contribute to our understanding of major characters.

Note the circumstances of each character's establishment:

- What is each character wearing? Costume and colour are important.
- What is happening in the text?
- Describe the set and the place of the character within it. (See page 264 for more on mise en scène.)
- Describe camera angles in relation to the way each character is established.
- Note what characters are doing when we meet them.
- How do sound and editing contribute to the establishment of character?

It is likely that your thoughts about characters will develop over time. Leave plenty of space to add to your character profiles.



Figure 9.19 In *Birdman* (2014), directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu, Riggan's character is established from the very first shot.

Character development, motivation and relationships

Character development involves the interrelationship between location, story and characters. These may be situations of the character's creation, such as returning to town to seek revenge, as was the situation for Tilly in *The Dressmaker*, or the result of an accident and pre-existing relationship woes, as was the case for Constable Graham McGahan in *Noise* (2007).

Character development and resolution are usually based on motivation, combined with the portrayal of relationships between characters. Motivation may involve the way a character is positioned within the narrative in relation to the circumstances in which he or she finds themselves and as a result of their interaction with other characters.

Characters represent ideas. Character motivation is a good indicator of ideology. In mainstream texts, the protagonist is usually motivated by the need to restore order and set the world right. This motivation reflects the dominant ideology of the society in which the text is produced. Antagonists usually reflect the opposite and, as a result, audiences expect them to be punished for their actions, unless they have a change of heart and turn to good rather than evil.

Production techniques highlight aspects of motivation. Lighting can suggest meaning in the prop a character may pick up. Fast-paced editing and hand-held cameras suggest inner turmoil. Sound effects can be used to develop a menacing or vulnerable character. Watch key character development scenes with the volume muted to pick up the subtle visual construction of character motivation, such as acting, and then listen to the same scene with your eyes closed to determine the contribution of sound.

Audiences can often predict character motivation, development and resolution. We are well aware of what motivates Vincent and Max in *Collateral* (2004), directed by Michael Mann, and although unable to predict the exact nature of the climax, we have a reasonable understanding of how character arcs may resolve in the text's resolution. Motivation may also be drawn from audience expectation of particular actors or plot developments. Audiences sympathise with William McGuinness's character Nick in *Look Both Ways* (2005), directed by Sarah Watt, and John in *Unfinished Sky* (2007), directed by Peter Duncan, where McGuinness's acting style plays on audience familiarity in order to develop similar expectations of a lonely and disconnected protagonist in both films.



Figure 9.20 Character development may occur as the result of an accident, as was the case for Constable Graham McGahan in *Noise*.

Relationships between characters are constructed to develop the narrative, building its sense of realism through dialogue and actions that represent how audiences expect characters to react to the narrative triggers introduced into the text. Realism is suggested through the selection and editing of shots, in particular the spatial and rhythmic relationship between shots, a technique termed 'continuity editing'. For more on editing, see page 274. As you can see, it is not possible to effectively analyse how a narrative is constructed by examining codes and conventions in isolation of each other; they always work together.

Relationships between protagonists, antagonists and minor, even transitory characters contribute to narrative depth and character motivation. They also reveal the ideological point of view of a narrative. Watch how lead characters treat shop assistants, bus drivers and co-workers. Reading these apparently inconsequential actions can reveal much about the relationships of power in the storyworld.

Activity 9.14 Character development

For each of your texts, draw up a table that summarises character development and motivation throughout the text. Begin with codes and conventions related to story elements, and then add in how the story is conveyed through codes and conventions related to production and audience.

Character name:		Scene:	
Story	Production	Audience readings	Effect on character development

Setting

Related to story and mise en scène, setting provides a location in which to stage the action. Settings may comprise actual locations or may be constructed. Settings can be realistic, or consist of digitally created mattes into which the actors are placed. The setting of a film is important in itself. Audiences bring expectations of particular settings to a narrative based on where it is set. This was the case for *La La Land* (2016), directed by Damien Chazelle. Audiences know Los Angeles as a place where many would-be stars go to be discovered; this knowledge impacts on their reading of the events in the film.

The term ‘setting’ refers to more than sets built on sound stages; it implies a sense of place which can have a dramatic effect on the narrative or bring its own character to the story. The setting contributes to narrative through the ways it contains and constrains on-screen action.

Typically, setting is referred to in general – the film *Wish You Were Here* (2012), directed by Kieran Darcy-Smith, is set in Cambodia and Australia – and in particular – most of the action occurs in a suburban Sydney home. Although it is part of the mise en scène, the role of setting is usually analysed in its own right.



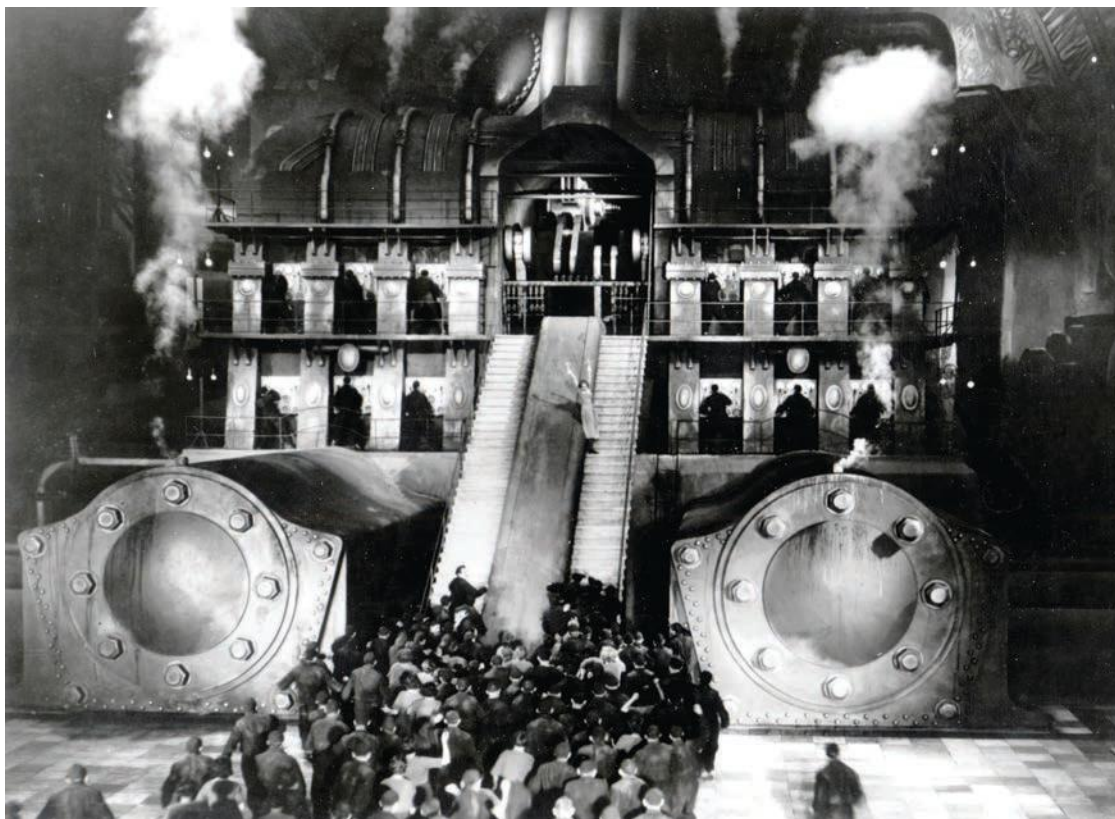
Figure 9.21 *La La Land* is set in Los Angeles, which has an impact on how audiences read the narrative.

Setting contributes to the way an audience interprets character motivation and action. The setting may introduce a character, or develop, reinforce or change the way in which an audience reads a character by suggesting that they are, for example, comfortable, trustworthy or significant through the way they interact with their surroundings. For example, by staging action in a setting that dwarfs characters, a filmmaker can suggest that these characters are insignificant or unable to complete the tasks required of them. Conversely, a cramped setting may suggest that characters are too big for the action, or that they are emotionally constrained.

Setting can be a neutral vehicle for character interaction or a powerful ideological and/or dramatic force that can influence the direction and tone of the narrative. The imagined Gotham City is both familiar and a threatening presence in Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight* (2008). In Greg McLean's *Wolf Creek* (2005), the sheer isolation of the setting alone warns the audience of the horrors to come. On a different level, the magnificent timeworn surface of the Kimberley Ranges is constantly compared and contrasted with Sandy's skin in *Japanese Story* (2003), directed by Sue Brooks. In all three films, setting is constructed as part metaphor, part character in its own right, comprising an integral part of the narrative.

Settings usually reinforce the action; that is, they are designed to complement and strengthen that which the audience sees and hears, such as war battles set in muddy fields and love scenes in softly lit bedrooms. Occasionally, however, setting is designed to contrast with the action. This juxtaposition exaggerates the narrative driving the underlying message more than if audience expectations were met. Emotions from passion to poignancy are enhanced. In *Lost in Translation* (2003), directed by Sofia Coppola, bustling Tokyo is juxtaposed against the inner world of the protagonists Bob and Charlotte who, while in Tokyo, are not part of it.

Setting serves a metaphorical role in many narratives. In *Noise*, the isolated caravan in which Graham spends much of the film serves as a metaphor for his thoughts, while in Fritz Lang's dystopian futuristic narrative *Metropolis* (1927), humanity is divided into thinkers and workers. The setting of this film not only provides a location for the plot, it becomes part of the narrative itself as characters move through and interact with the set. Lang's ideological beliefs are evident.



Alamy Stock Photo/Moviestore collection Ltd

Figure 9.22 *Metropolis* (1927), directed by Fritz Lang. It is not difficult to read Lang's point of view as expressed in the design and scale of the setting in this very powerful mise en scène.



Figure 9.23 The story of the wealthy and self-obsessed Whitman brothers in *The Darjeeling Limited* could have been set almost anywhere.



Figure 9.24 *Spirited Away* uses a combination of realism, metaphor and fantasy to suggest that the adventures of the protagonists are based in truth.

Some settings serve to juxtapose characters against location using the idea that by placing opposites together the meaning of the narrative will be evident. In *The Darjeeling Limited* (2007), directed by Wes Anderson, the wealthy and self-obsessed Whitman brothers travel across India by train, yet their story could have been set almost anywhere – the lush otherness of India is in contrast to the emotional journey on which they are really travelling.

Animated narratives have some advantages when it comes to setting. Narratives such as *Spirited Away* (2001), directed by Hayao Miyazaki, and Adam Elliot's *Mary and Max* (2009) use a combination of realism, metaphor and fantasy to suggest that the adventures of the protagonists represent an important truth. In animated texts, it is easier for the creator to manipulate and distort setting, but this does not mean that distortion is not used in film and TV narratives.

Composite settings can be created using **mattes**, front or back projection, chroma key (green screen) technology and computer-generated imagery (CGI). Comic book franchise narratives such as *Deadpool* (2016), directed by Tim Miller, could not have been made without CGI. Some critics argue that reliance on these techniques has seen the death of narrative, as plot and character development take a back seat to special effects. What do you think?

Activity 9.15 Setting and narrative development

Analyse the contribution of setting to the texts you are studying. Create illustrated notes that comment on how setting contributes to:

- plot
- character establishment and development
- key scenes
- themes
- audience engagement.

Activity 9.16 Studying setting

The setting of your texts usually has a physical, metaphorical and ideological impact on the narrative. Create a chart that analyses each of these. Take several key scenes, and note what you see and how it contributes to meaning.

Structuring of time

The structuring of time makes a vital contribution to most narratives. Although it often seems otherwise, few films occur in real time. While the duration of the story may be days, weeks or years, the duration of the plot will be measured in hours. Most audiences are aware of the effect of the order in which the narrative is presented (see 'narrative structures', page 235), but this is only one facet of how time is constructed in narrative texts.

The structuring of narrative time is made up of a combination of three elements:

- **Temporal order**: the order in which the story is screened, which may include chronological order, flashbacks and/or **flash forwards**

- **Temporal duration:** the manipulation of time from real time to reel time; that is, the foreshortening or expansion of time through editing the duration of events on screen
- **Temporal frequency:** the number of times an event or part of an event is shown to an audience.

Temporal order

Temporal order is manipulated to advance a narrative, engaging the audience by providing important information about character, motivation and previous or predicted events. The restructuring of story order into plot order has traditionally been associated with independent filmmakers, although its popularity has increased in recent years as audiences have become increasingly sophisticated in their understanding of the codes and conventions of film structure.

Temporal duration

Temporal duration usually involves the foreshortening of the storyline to fit the length of the narrative. Days, months or years become minutes, and even the most epic story is over in under three hours (all right, nine if you count all three films in the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy).

Foreshortening of time is created through editing codes and conventions, primarily **ellipsis**. A character steps into a car – cut to the next scene and the character is in a different location, and the audience understands time has been foreshortened. Fades to black or white, wipes, digital transition effects and time-lapse action are all conventional methods of editing time.

Costume, make-up and acting may be used to age an actor by hours or years. Lighting, set decoration and even music can represent the passage of time. When analysing how time is foreshortened in a narrative, it is important to note the technical codes that construct the effect, as well as exploring why the director has chosen particular techniques and the effect of these techniques on narrative development.

A common method used to step up the pace of a narrative is to increase the rate of time manipulation as the narrative progresses. This adds intensity to the plot and also cues an audience to anticipate the climax. This technique usually appears natural; audiences know and expect such manipulation. Occasionally, attention is drawn to the speeding up of time through the use of visual cues, such as a transition from day to night, sound cues in the form of dialogue, or textual cues in the form of titles. One notable example of this is in *The Shining*, where titles mark the passing of months, weeks, days and finally hours in the lead-up to the final devastating confrontation between Jack and his demons.

I think that even if you're wondering if two characters are ever going to kiss, drawing out the inevitability is part of the fun. Whatever the genre happens to be.

JJ Abrams, film director

Narrative time may also be expanded. Audiences are familiar with slow-motion sequences in action films, which allow audiences to appreciate the physical skill of the star as they battle evil, apparently through the application of sheer strength. Termed **speed ramping**, the technique was originally designed to allow directors to make impossible stunts appear possible. It soon acquired a meaning of its own, where the switch to slow motion became a cinematic code for strength and will. Achieved by manipulating the frame rate in camera and also in editing, this technique reached its apotheosis in the 'bullet time' effect in the Wachowski sisters' film *The Matrix* (1999). According to John Gaeta, visual effects supervisor on *The Matrix*, bullet time is: 'slowing down time to such an extent that you really see everything around you as clearly as you possibly could'. This technique also serves as a metaphor, manipulating on-screen action to imply characters' thought processes.

Time may also be expanded momentarily to give an audience a chance to reflect on a character's situation, or to mimic and therefore understand a character's thought processes. When Satine is told that she is dying in *Moulin Rouge!*, a sequence of fades to and from black allows the audience to take in the news in a way that mirrors Satine's thought processes.

A combination of real time, foreshortening and the expansion of time builds narrative progression. In *Panic Room* (2000), director David Fincher consciously calls the audience's attention to time as a device to build dramatic tension. When in danger, Meg Altman and her daughter have only seconds to escape

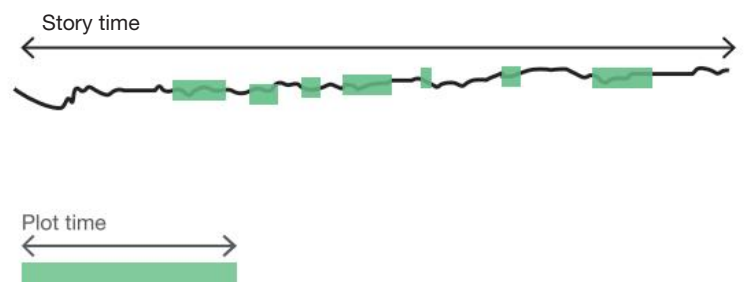


Figure 9.25 Ellipsis foreshortens story time into plot time. Source: filmsound.org.



Alamy Stock Photo/Ronald Grant Archive

Figure 9.26 Speed ramping became a cinematic code for strength and will, reaching its apotheosis in the 'bullet time' effect in *The Matrix*.

to the panic room built into their house. However, when they become trapped, a plot twist reveals that Sarah is a diabetic and needs insulin or she will die. The resolution of this thriller is dependent on Meg and Sarah beating time and saving themselves.

Temporal frequency

Temporal frequency involves the repetition of action from the same or different camera angles or through sound. It is another way to expand time, and also serves to emphasise the importance of a scene or shot within a narrative, and to create rhythm in a text. This technique has been used since the days of silent films, but has recently enjoyed a resurgence in popularity due to the technical ease with which it can be created through the marriage of multiple camera filming and digital editing. *The Dressmaker* opens with the sound of a rusty windmill. Audiences are at this stage unaware of the significance of this isolated sound, which is repeated several times throughout the film and **foreshadows** a moment of high drama. In *Gone Girl* (2014), David Fincher makes clever use of temporal frequency by framing similar shots with slight variations to emphasise the similarities and differences between characters.

Activity 9.17 Real versus reel time

Examining the structuring of time can reveal much about the narrative drive of the texts you are studying.

- 1 The first thing to establish is the real-time length of the story.
 - a Over what real time period does each of your texts occur?
 - b How long is each text?
 - c In what ways is time manipulated in each text?
- 2 Using the graph you created for Activity 9.11, create another overlay that charts real time against reel time. Compare the narrative intensity graph with the manipulation of time overlay. Is there any correlation?
- 3 Write a brief report about the structuring of time as a storytelling device for each of the texts you are studying. Provide detailed examples from key scenes, noting:
 - a how time is manipulated
 - b how time works in conjunction with other story and production elements
 - c why the director chose to manipulate time in the ways evident in the texts
 - d what the effect is on the audience, both in the scenes analysed and in the text overall.

Compare the structuring of time in both texts. What are the similarities and differences? To what do you attribute these?

Cause and effect

Narrative is all about cause and effect. Indeed, without it narrative would not exist. Most often associated with classical narrative cinema, the cause-and-effect chain provides impetus for the plot and feeds character motivation. Cause and effect constructs and develops narrative progression, from the initial event that triggers a narrative, through a series of subsequent linked events that develop the plot to its resolution. Film, TV and radio narratives comprise a series of cause-and-effect plot points resulting from the primary narrative trigger or cause that begins the narrative arc.

Cause and effect is culturally determined. In mainstream Western cinema, cause and effect appears natural or realistic. Acts of God, natural disasters and plain bad luck – while not uncommon – are rarely the cause of primary storylines. Instead, they serve as plot devices to introduce characters, to test character motivation and to add layers of complexity. Audiences are familiar with the cause-and-effect structure of storylines and enjoy learning how characters respond to the trials they encounter. A focus on individual success against all odds is a feature of classical narrative cinema.

In addition to the primary cause, a sequence of smaller cause and effect events are responsible for narrative progression. They may involve the development of a minor character, a subplot, or serve to illustrate an aspect of character motivation or plot development. The entire plot does not turn on these causes and effects, although an audience may not know it at the time, especially if such twists are employed as red herrings. They simply add depth to a narrative. Cause and effect is also a convenient device for the illustration of a theme or ideology. How characters respond to a cause and how audiences are positioned to read this response reveal much about the ideological basis of the text.

Cause and effect occurs on multiple levels within narratives, and you may find it helps to rank each example in order of importance to the plot. The simplest type of cause and effect is that on which a whole plot depends. Genre texts are often constructed on this basis. Think about the world of disaster movies: volcanoes, burning buildings, sinking ships, alien invasion, runaway trains, mad science; the list is very long. The disaster is the primary cause, and the entire plot is a series of cause-and-effect relationships built on the premise that the disaster must be overcome.

Other cause-and-effect storylines include:

- human mishap, as in *Run Lola Run* (1998), directed by Tom Tykwer
- illness and disability, as in *Philadelphia* (1993), directed by Jonathan Demme
- the search for love, as in *When Harry Met Sally* (1989), directed by Rob Reiner
- the achievement of a sporting or entertainment goal, as in *Little Miss Sunshine* (2006), directed by Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris
- the impact of crime, as in *Fargo* (1996), directed by Joel and Ethan Coen
- good versus evil, as in *The Dark Knight* (2008), directed by Christopher Nolan
- coming of age, as in *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* (2015), directed by Alfonso Gomez-Rejon.

Science fiction films are not about science. They are about disaster, which is one of the oldest subjects of art.

Susan Sontag, writer and filmmaker

Activity 9.18 Cause-and-effect flow chart

- 1 For each of your texts, identify both major and minor examples of cause and effect. Note these in story order.
- 2 Create flow charts that illustrate how cause and effect structures the storyline.
- 3 At each plot point where cause and effect are evident, speculate on the alternative scenarios that could have been presented. Why do you think the screenwriter and director chose the path that appeared in the text?

The hero's journey: a model for examining cause and effect in narrative

Many films take the form of a hero's journey. The hero's journey is based on the work of psychiatrist Carl Jung, as adapted by Joseph Campbell and, more recently, by script analyst Christopher Volgeris. It is a model that seeks to explain the mythic structure embedded in so many popular films. The hero usually represents the ideologies on which the narrative is based.

The hero's journey begins in the ordinary world, where the audience comes to know the protagonist. This is followed by a number of stages:

- The call to adventure: the protagonist meets the problem, quest or challenge – the cause that provides motivation for the entire narrative.
- Refusing the call: the protagonist is afraid or reluctant to embark on the challenge.
- The mentor: a meeting with a mentor provides motivation and encouragement for the protagonist.

The journey moves to the special world:

- Crossing the first threshold: the protagonist embarks on adventure and enters the special world.
- Passing tests: the protagonist learns more about the challenge and the special world, earning the assistance of allies, and defeating or learning from enemies.
- Crossing the second threshold: the protagonist approaches the innermost cave and prepares for the biggest challenge of all.
- The supreme ordeal: this is the climax, where the protagonist faces the greatest challenge, or a physical and/or metaphorical death, and emerges a hero.
- Seizing the rewards: the hero enjoys the rewards, but the audience knows that the journey is not yet finished.
- The road back: the hero recommits to the journey.
- Death and resurrection: the hero faces the climactic ordeal that redeems and purifies.

The journey returns to the ordinary world, where the hero is equipped with knowledge that will benefit this world.

Activity 9.19 Are your texts a hero's journey?

The hero's journey is a very common narrative structure, and it is likely that the texts you are studying will match the model.

Try to fit the storylines of your texts to the hero's journey. Do not be concerned if you can't create an exact match; it is a model, after all.

What beliefs does the hero in your text represent? How does his or her journey represent the ideologies on which the narrative is based?



Figure 9.27 *The Lego Movie* (2014), directed by Phil Lord and Christopher Miller, is a classic hero's journey.

Alamy Stock Photo/Pictorial Press Ltd

Point of view

The term 'point of view' has two meanings; one applies to all narrative, the other is specific to film, TV and photographic narratives:

- The first relates to story, and refers to the point of view from which the narrative is presented.
- The second is a production code, and refers to a shot that is taken from a character's point of view.

This shot is usually abbreviated to 'POV'.

Babel is about the point of view of others. It literally includes points of views as experienced from the other side. It is not about a hero. It is not about only one country. It is a prism that allows us to see the same reality from different angles.

Alejandro González Iñárritu

In most narratives, one character's point of view is privileged over others. More is revealed about this character through codes and conventions such as narration, flashback, POV shots and acting. This character will usually have more on-screen time than other characters. When this character is on the phone, for example, the audience interprets the conversation from the character's point of view – we see and hear the character and are able to make judgements about their behaviour and motivation. The other character is simply a disembodied voice on the line. The audience is positioned to treat the main character subjectively; other characters are constructed to be read more objectively. Such was the case in *Animal Kingdom* when Josh rings Grandma Smurf.

Think about your reaction to Saroo's search for his home in *Lion* (2016), directed by Garth Davis. Throughout the film, the audience has been positioned to empathise with Saroo, to cry for him and ultimately rejoice with him as a triumphant hero. Point of view can also shift between characters, as was the case in *Room* (2015), directed by Lenny Abrahamson, where the point of view shifts between two lead characters, Ma and Jack, which directs audience sympathy to one or the other.

Point of view may be omniscient; that is, the director gives an audience greater knowledge than that of the characters. Have you ever sat on the edge of your seat in a cinema pleading with a character not to enter a darkened room where the baddie is waiting? You can do this because you have been provided with an omniscient point of view – you know more than the victim. Directors play with the information they give an audience, manipulating knowledge to build tension and suggest clues to possible narrative resolutions. Sometimes these clues are red herrings, and the audience assumes omnipotence only to find that they have been led astray. The omniscient point of view is an excellent way to engage an audience.

Filmmakers manipulate point of view to add depth to our reading of a narrative. In *The Darjeeling Limited*, Wes Anderson signals a change from the point of view of Francis to that of Peter or Jack through rearranging the order and relative size of each of the brothers on screen; the audience comes to understand that we are seeing events through the point of view of the brother in the middle. Ana Kokkinos, on the other hand, constructs the experiences of her characters in *Blessed* (2009) twice – once through the point of view of the children, and again through that of their mothers.

Filmmakers use point of view to express their opinion and values, constructing the narrative to reflect their ideology. Narratives may demonstrate political or social commentary on the dominant ideology of the time and place in which they were made, or may be constructed to express a point of view about an aspect of the human condition. What views do you think Sam Mendes is saying about life at the end of the 20th century through his use of interconnected elements as diverse as plot, character, motif, voice-over and colour in *American Beauty* (1999)? Even children's films such as *Monsters Inc.* (2001), directed by Peter Docter, *Happy Feet* (2006), directed by George Miller, and *The Lego Movie* (2014), directed by Phil Lord and Christopher Miller, express a clear ideological message through the construction of their points of view.

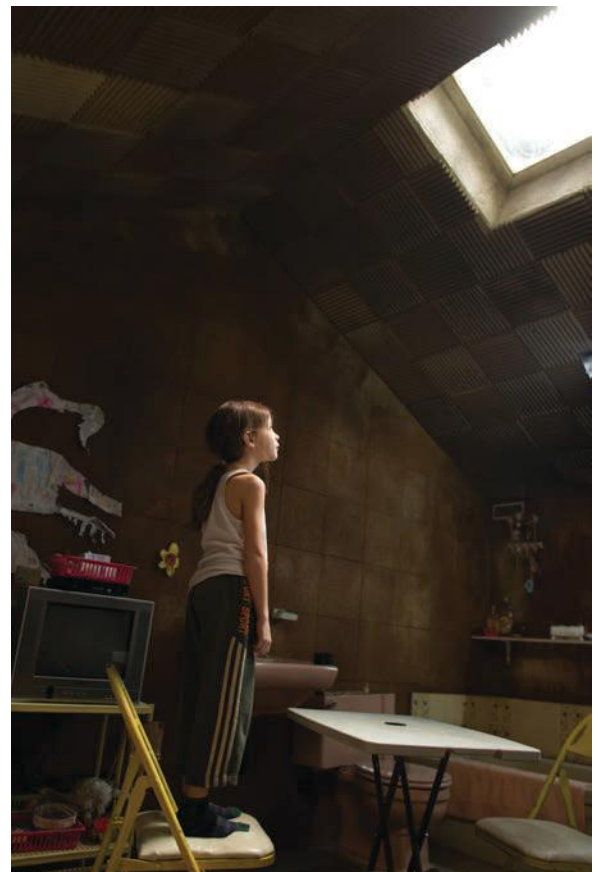


Figure 9.28 In *Room*, audiences are forced to understand Jack's point of view.

Alamy Stock Photo/Photo 12

Activity 9.20 Ideology through point of view

Examine representations in the narratives you are studying to determine how the point of view from which the narratives are structured reflects the ideologies on which the texts are based.

Remember that ideology may be obvious and up front or it may inform the narrative in a more subtle way. This methodology will organise your analysis:

- What do we see, hear and read?
- How have representations in the narrative been constructed?
- Why have they been constructed in this way?
- How is the audience positioned to read these representations?
- What other readings can be made of the representations in these narratives?

Climax, closure and denouement

Climax

Audiences anticipate the climax of a narrative with mixed emotions. Because the climax signals the beginning of narrative closure, an audience may feel ambivalent – both eager to see how the narrative possibilities they have followed are resolved, yet not ready to see the text come to a close. Audiences devote a great deal of emotional and intellectual energy to a narrative. While suspending disbelief, they engage in a constant process of sifting through information, building a picture of the narrative world, testing plot development against what has gone before, and predicting outcomes. Even when the outcome is assured, when they know that evil will be thwarted and the guy will get the girl, the climax sees an audience so embedded in the narrative journey that it matters little what will happen – how, when and why are the questions for which the audience seeks answers.

Building a climax is a complex process. Story codes and conventions – including multiple storylines, narrative intensity, character and plot development – combine with the production codes and conventions to create what the director hopes will be a moment of complete emotional engagement with the text. The form of this engagement varies from a simple ‘I see’, to cheers and tears, but emotional release is only one aspect of the closure of a narrative. Audiences must be engaged until the last and an element of surprise is frequently included in the climax; this is especially the case in genre texts and television series. Think about the extended climaxes common to horror movies, where audience expectation is thwarted as twist after twist delay the final conquering of evil.

For some narratives, the main storyline climax occurs earlier in the storyline, as was the case for *Room*. In these texts, it is the effect of the climax on characters and relationships that takes up much of the narrative.



Figure 9.29 The extended climax of *The Shining* (1980), directed by Stanley Kubrick, continues long after the famous axe-through-the-door scene.

Activity 9.21 Where and what is the climax?

For most narratives, it is easy to tell when the climax has finished, but where it begins is often debatable.

Use the charts you created for narrative development, multiple storylines, narrative intensity, the hero's journey, and cause and effect to help determine the beginning of the climax for each of your texts.

- 1 How does story development contribute to the construction of the climax?
- 2 How do production codes and conventions engage an audience in the lead-up to and during each climax?
- 3 Are there any structural similarities between the climaxes in the texts you are studying?

Analyse both story patterns and technical codes and conventions in the analysis of structural similarities and differences.

Closure and denouement

Just as important as the beginning of a narrative is how it concludes. Imagine your reaction if the credits began rolling immediately after the baddie has been arrested, the guy kisses the girl or the dragon is slain. You would be stranded in a state of excitement and dissatisfaction – too many unanswered questions would leave you drained. Most people don't stay for the credits (Media students excepted), but they never leave before the closure of a narrative. Why is this? The answer is that the narrative possibilities may have been resolved and the plot complete, but the story is not yet complete.

Audiences need time to settle after the climax, to reflect upon the links between narrative possibilities, the progression of the narrative and its resolution. Audiences enjoy those scenes in which subplots and the fates of minor characters are resolved and where, in some genres such as superhero movies, the possibility of a sequel is revealed. This period is called the denouement, a French term that originally meant 'untying', which is precisely its function. The denouement unties an audience from a narrative, providing space for them to disengage with the narrative journey and to return to the real world. The denouement provides narrative closure.

In some texts, denouement and closure take the form of an extended scene or sequence. *Psycho* is structured in this way, with a question-and-answer sequence in which the fate of Marion, the money and Norman are revealed. *Almost Famous* uses a series of visual vignettes to satisfy audience curiosity about what the future will hold for each character, while *Lost in Translation* takes a different approach by posing a question for the audience and leaving the resolution open. Another technique is to structure the climax so that denouement becomes a process of slow realisation in the hours or days following a narrative's closure, as was the case for many audiences with *Noise* and *Birdman*.

TV narratives may employ the same closing structures as those used for film or, if the narrative is ongoing, may choose to end at the moment of climax. These cliffhanger endings are designed to engage and intrigue an audience, with the intention of seeking commitment to the next exciting episode. In recent years, cliffhanger endings have become not only controversial but also great selling points for television series. See the discussion of story arcs on page 288 to find out more.

The relationship between opening and closure

While it is a given that opening and closure are linked, there is so much more to this link than the relationship between narrative possibilities and resolution. While ideas, themes and issues that have been introduced and developed are resolved, there is often a relationship between the visual and sound elements used in the opening of a text and those used in its closure. This strengthens the narrative as a whole and provides the audience with a sense of the text as a unified package. Colour, musical themes, location and acting are examples of techniques that can be used to link openings with closure and reinforce the premise of the text. Look for how production and story codes and conventions are used to 'bookend' your texts.

Activity 9.22 Beginnings and endings: content and construction

- For each of your texts, construct a table that outlines the relationship between opening and closure. Write notes under the following headings to see the relationship between story and production elements in narrative construction.

Opening				Closure			
	Story	Production	Audience		Story	Production	Audience
Narrative possibilities				Narrative resolution			
Audience expectations				Audience satisfaction			
Ideas, themes and issues introduced				Resolution of ideas, themes and issues			
Possible social and/or political commentary				Text's point of view and ideology			

- Use screenshots to create an illustrated analysis of the relationship between the opening and closure of each text showing how codes and conventions related to story and production elements are used to create this relationship and engage the audience.

As a filmmaker you get typecast just as much as an actor does, so I'm trapped in a genre that I love, but I'm trapped in it!

George A Romero, film director

Genre

Genre is a method of categorising texts according to type. Common film genres include Westerns, war movies, horror, crime dramas, musicals and science fiction. TV genres sometimes share the characteristics of feature films, but there are also genres specific to TV, such as game shows, situation comedies and soaps. Recent developments in technology have seen a range of new TV genres flourish, including reality TV and **edutainment**.

Media students, academics and commentators have long argued about the importance of genre in analysing narrative texts. Genres mature and merge over time, borrowing elements from each other and spawning subgenres such as comedy horror films or steampunk dramas. The debate about the value of genre centres on arguments about the extent to which genre texts are simplistic, clichéd and formulaic.

The term 'genre' eventually becomes pejorative because you're referring to something that's so codified and ritualised that it ceases to have the power and meaning it had when it first started.

Christopher Nolan, film director

Classification according to type

Romantic comedy is a popular genre, with a long history and seemingly endless variations on the theme of boy meets unlikely girl, a trouble-thwarted relationship, climax, resolution, and girl and boy living happily ever after. As ritualised as they may be, audiences continue to enjoy genre texts.

Romantic comedy as a pop culture would not exist without the convention of unlikely, mismatched lovers who start out despising one another before eventually warming up.

We are all happy to suspend disbelief for the 90 minutes or so it usually takes for a movie to work its way through this familiar premise. But filmmakers can never become complacent when handling such a storyline, because we still have to believe that, at some level, these characters are 'made for each other'.

Adrian Martin, *The Age* film critic, writing about *Along Came Polly* (2004), directed by John Hamburg

Consider how the generic conventions of the texts you are studying have developed. The history of each genre can be thought of as a pyramid: all films in the genre build on what has come before. Filmmakers have seen earlier texts in the genre and further develop the plots, characters, ideas and techniques of these texts, adding plot twists and layers of sophistication so that audiences (who will be familiar with the genre) will be engaged by the latest incarnation.

Early texts in any given genre are often taken by filmmakers and audiences as a 'given'; that is, as background common to the genre. This shared knowledge can benefit the genre by acting as a kind of shorthand – the filmmaker does not have to explain plot points, characters, themes, motifs and production conventions in detail, thus allowing focus on the unique features of the new text.

When I make a film, I am hoping to reinvent the genre a little bit. I just do it my way. I make my own little Quentin versions of them ... I consider myself a student of cinema. It's almost like I am going for my professorship in cinema, and the day I die is the day I graduate. It is a lifelong study.

Quentin Tarantino

Activity 9.23 Genre construction

We all have a favourite genre. Which is yours?

Here is a list of the common narrative genres:

- Action
- Crime
- Fantasy
- Musical
- Adventure
- Film noir
- Mystery
- Thriller
- Melodrama
- Drama
- Horror
- Romance





- Comedy
- Romantic comedy
- War
- Sci-fi
- Western.

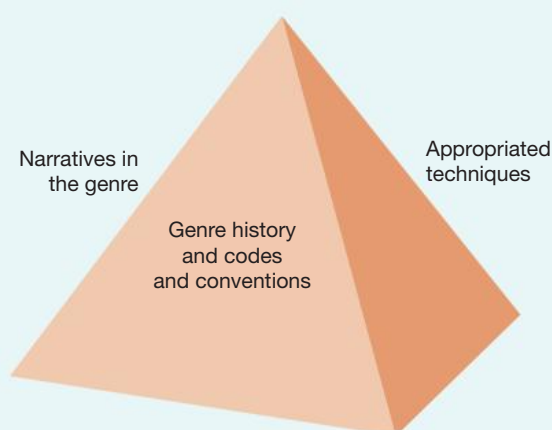
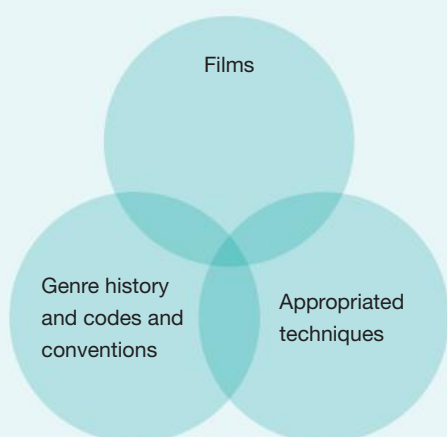
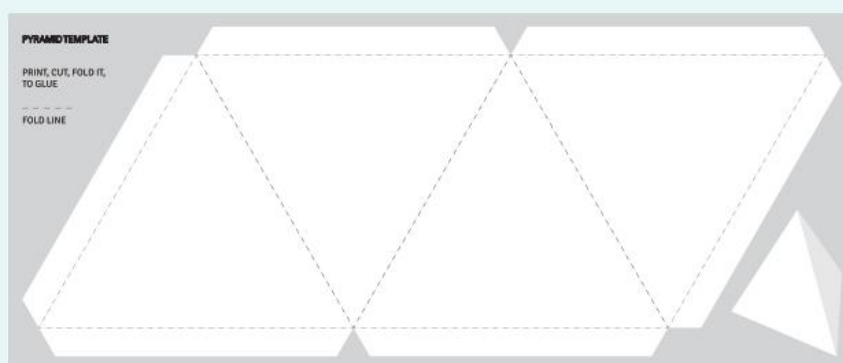
- 1 Write a list of all the texts you have seen in your favourite genre.
- 2 Use this list to jog your memory about the similarities between each text. Think about plotlines, subplots, character types, setting, themes, camera and lighting techniques, sound and music, clichés – everything that signals genre. Write these down under the following headings:
 - Story codes and conventions
 - Production codes and conventions
 - Audience expectation.
- 3 Use the elements you have identified to create a plot and treatment for a new film or TV narrative in this genre.

I do like the zombie movies quite a bit. I know there are purist zombie guys that don't like the running zombies, but I dig the infected thing. I think that's a scarier incorporation of an element into the genre.

Mark Pellegrino, actor

Activity 9.24 Genre building

- 1 Using the list you created for Activity 9.23, order the texts chronologically. Now research the history of the genre, beginning at the Internet Movie Database genre finder and create a list of this history.
- 2 List all the codes and conventions that have been appropriated from other genres and films that are used in the genre you are researching.
- 3 Create diagrammatic representations of your favourite genre, using a concept map or three-sided pyramid to illustrate thematic and historic links.



Zombie films reflect the social and political concerns of their time

In recent years there has been a tremendous interest in zombie films, and like other horror genres such as vampire and monster films, zombie films are a rich source of information about our cultural concerns and ideologies.

Intertextuality

The process of drawing – even unconsciously – on other texts to provide a structure or meaning is termed **intertextuality**. We do not consume a text as completely separate from our experience of other texts in that medium, or other text types. We understand media texts as part of a continuum, so all texts can create meaning by **referencing** other texts. When consuming a text, audiences bring expectations based on experience and knowledge of other texts to their readings.

Intertextual elements add complexity and layers of meaning to a narrative and can point to the ideological beliefs on which they are based. Audiences enjoy the references to other texts. Intertextuality can work as a shorthand method of constructing meaning. At its simplest, intertextuality may involve a piece of well-known music. The use of story and production techniques such as dialogue, lighting or costume is more complex. One example is the blue-toned lighting in *The Social Network* (2010), directed by David Fincher, which references Facebook and suggests to its audiences that social media can be alienating. Some texts are constructed using intertextual references as the dominant storytelling technique. A well-known example is *Moulin Rouge!*

Samurai films, like westerns, need not be familiar genre stories. They can expand to contain stories of ethical challenges and human tragedy.

Roger Ebert, film critic

Of course, there is a downside to genre – after extended use it can become tired or clichéd, and audiences disengage with the same old ideas and techniques. In this situation, there are three possible outcomes:

- the genre will die out for a time
- it will blend with other genres, or
- it will move in the direction of comedy or parody.

Westerns are one example. From John Ford's 1939 classic *Stagecoach*, Westerns were very popular throughout the 1940s, 1950s and into the 1960s, but with a few notable exceptions the genre sank into disrepute and very few were made between 1970 and the end of the 20th century. Those that were made often had comedic elements, such as Mel Brooks's *Blazing Saddles* (1974). Recently, however, the genre has seen a resurgence with films such as *No Country for Old Men* (2007), directed by Joel and Ethan Cohen, and *The Revenant* (2015), directed by Alejandro González Iñárritu.

Genre texts do not develop in isolation of each other; they are influenced by other texts and genres to the extent that sometimes it is almost impossible to decide how to categorise them into just one genre. Similarly, genre texts are influenced by the fashions and social concerns of the time and place of production. Thus stock characters and plot points can come to represent issues beyond their literal meaning.

I see horror as part of legitimate film. I don't see it as an independent genre that has nothing to do with the rest of cinema.

Guillermo del Toro, film director

The development of genre texts across time often reveals shifts in the ideologies on which society is based. One example is American war films made in the years following the Second World War, which were mostly highly patriotic and racist, reflecting the dominant ideologies around freedom and race existent at that time. Later, after the Vietnam War, conflicting ideologies were apparent in texts made during the 1970s and 1980s. Some supported US Government involvement, others criticised it. Differing ideological views about US foreign policy continue to be played out in recent films. If you are studying texts produced across time, analyse how they reflect changing ideologies.

Activity 9.25 Cross-genre pollination

The narratives you are studying for this area of study may be genre texts or they may be influenced by genre texts.

- 1 Look at the list of common narrative genres in Activity 9.23.
 - a Do your texts fit any of these genres? If you are not sure, check out other texts in the genre to see if there are any similarities.
 - b Are your texts influenced by genre texts in any way? (In the 21st century, it is very difficult to argue that a narrative is not influenced by genre to some degree.)
- 2 Write an essay or an annotated visual report that argues the case for or against the texts you are studying as representations of genre.



Alamy Stock Photo/Moviestore collection Ltd

Figure 9.30 *Baby Driver* (2017), directed by Edgar Wright, references many genres.

PRODUCTION CODES AND CONVENTIONS CONSTRUCT MEDIA NARRATIVES

Codes and conventions related to production techniques are the technical building blocks of media construction. Mostly unnoticed and certainly under-appreciated by most audiences, production techniques not only construct and convey stories, they suggest how an audience should read a narrative. Production technologies are used to construct codes and conventions related to image, sound and text. Without these techniques and technologies, audiences have a story; with them we have a narrative.

Try watching a film or TV narrative with the sound turned down. What do you pick up and how much do you miss? Conversely, cover the screen and listen to the soundtrack. You will quickly realise that sound and vision work interdependently to construct a narrative. For an audience, the meaning of any narrative lies in the relationship between codes and conventions related to story and production as well as the role audience plays: the narrative equation.

Visual production techniques and reception

Visual codes and conventions are part of production design and include the qualities of the medium – film, video or digital imaging. How these codes and conventions will be interpreted by an audience will depend on the reception context. Film is made to be seen in a cinema, while TV and streamed narratives are constructed to be consumed in a less controlled environment and on a smaller screen. However, these days we commonly watch feature films on smaller screens than the filmmaker intended, trading the impact of reduced screen size for a convenient viewing experience. But what if it were the other way around? How would your favourite TV narrative look and sound on a big cinema screen? Would you be as forgiving?

Film, videotape and digital technologies

The qualities of the film stock, videotape or digital recording formats significantly influence the way in which an audience reads a text. Directors choose the medium and film stock to suit their intended purpose and audience, aesthetic, budget, style of storytelling and the needs of the location.

Common commercial film formats are 35 mm and 70 mm. Generally, the wider the film gauge, the better the quality of the image (and the more expensive the film is to produce). For each film format, a range of film stocks is available, each with its own aesthetic and technical characteristics. Google 'motion picture film stock' for more information. A director works with the director of photography to select the film stock or digital technologies, including colour palette, richness, detail, softness, grain, contrast and the level of saturation. Film speed is important, as it determines the type of lighting required in the studio or on location. The classical Hollywood tradition is to use film stock that can

PRACTICAL TIP

If you are studying film, do try to see your texts at least once in a cinema on the big screen, in the dark, with the sight and sound projected as intended by the filmmaker. It will be worth it!



Figure 9.31 *Collateral* (2004), directed by Michael Mann, was shot on video, not for budget reasons, but to achieve a desired look.

recreate images that are close to our perception of what is a 'real' image. Other cinematic styles, such as **film noir**, reject this notion of a realistic image and make use of a particular film stock, together with lighting, gels and filters, lenses and exposure levels, to create the desired effect. In post-production, the film may be colour corrected, tinted or otherwise manipulated to enhance these qualities.

Video is a different technology. Until recently, film had much greater definition than video; hence the image was sharper. Increasingly, however, quality digital video has dramatically expanded, and post-production effects and digital projection can make it difficult to determine whether a text was shot on film or video.

Film and video have practical and aesthetic strengths and weaknesses. Budget may be the driving factor for filmmakers deciding to shoot digitally, but it is not the

only factor. As with the selection of particular film stock, some filmmakers choose digital because it has the look they want or they can achieve the shots they need using smaller equipment. As recently as five years ago, approximately half of feature films were shot on film; today that number is closer to 25 per cent. While film purists including Martin Scorsese, Quentin Tarantino and Wes Anderson insist that film gives a more authentic look, especially in terms of colour and skin tones, directors such as Peter Jackson, Joss Whedon and David Fincher are increasingly working digitally because it gives them greater flexibility.

The fact that most films aren't presented in 35 mm means that the world is lost. Digital projection is just television in cinema.

Quentin Tarantino

The frame

The **frame** is the basic unit of visual construction – it not only defines what audiences see but, importantly, what they do not. The frame operates both physically and symbolically to construct narrative. The idea of a narrative framed for our consumption seems natural to audiences, but this apparent naturalness is illusory – the frame is one of the conventions of both film and photographic construction.

Audiences do not expect to see what is on either side of the frame; they make assumptions based on the idea that a narrative is realistic, that there is ground below and sky above. Even in texts where an audience is placed in the middle of the action, they rarely consider what is behind them. In the early days of film, this was not always the case, and it took audiences some time to learn the convention of framing. Even today, audiences can occasionally 'forget' that a text is constructed by framing the action, and look to the side of the screen for a character they can hear via surround sound. With the coming of VR, such behaviour will become commonplace.

Aspect ratio

The aspect ratio of the screen on which audiences view a film or TV program influences their reading of the text. Until recently, texts broadcast on TV were broadcast in the aspect ratio of 1.33:1, commonly known as 4 × 3. Today, free-to-air and pay-TV stations broadcast widescreen, which has an aspect ratio of 1.78:1 or 16 × 9. This is still less than widescreen film (1.85:1), CinemaScope cinema (2.35:1) or other formats.

The significance of aspect ratio is evident when one considers the diagram below. It is always a good idea to view a film in the aspect ratio in which it was shot.

Manipulating the aspect ratio can also be an effective code to indicate the time in which a film is set. Wes Anderson created *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014) in three aspect ratios, each representing a jump in time. To reinforce this, he also altered the colour. Follow the weblink to read more about it.



Weblink

In the early days of TV, widescreen texts used to be converted to 4×3 through a process called 'pan and scan', where an operator panned across the screen selecting the framing to be scanned for TV. Today, texts are broadcast using black bars to letterbox or frame the screen, which means that on smaller screens detail can be lost. It is always better to see a text as the director intended.

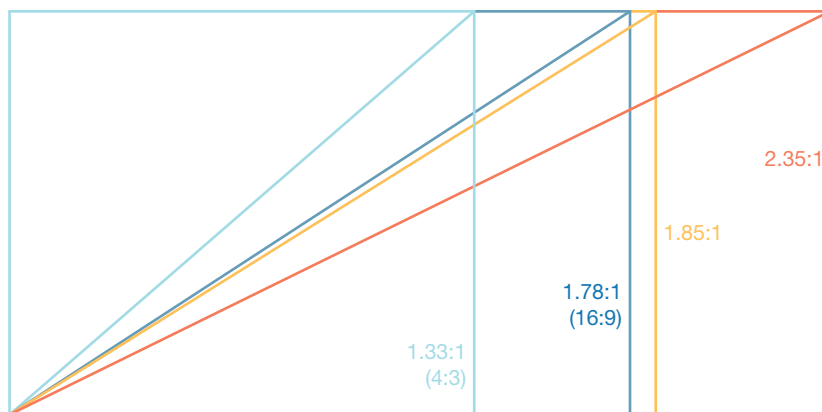


Figure 9.32 Aspect ratio



Figure 9.33 What a difference aspect ratio can make. *The Grand Budapest Hotel* (2014), directed by Wes Anderson.

Visual composition is what we remember

Long after the conclusion of a visual narrative, image composition stays with an audience. Close your eyes and think about the texts you are studying. What do you remember? It is likely that what you recall is what you can see – colours, characters, movement, sets and locations.

The visual construction of narratives supports our memories of other story and production codes and conventions, such as plot, point of view, dialogue, music and editing. The analysis of visual composition, ***mise en scène*** in film and television texts, has a long tradition among film scholars who analyse how every detail works alone and in conjunction with others to suggest meaning within a frame.

Visual style

When designing the *mise en scène*, a filmmaker must decide on a visual style that is appropriate to the plot, genre and themes of the narrative. Will the *mise en scène* be visually rich, as in *The Lord of the Rings* (2001–03), directed by Peter Jackson, or pared down to theatrical bare essentials, as in *Dogville* (2003), directed by Lars Von Trier? Period texts often recreate the imagined lushness of the time and place in which the text is set. Films set in the future, on the other hand, may employ a spare *mise en scène*, such as that designed for *Gattaca* (1997), directed by Andrew Niccol, or a dystopian decaying one, as was the case in Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982) and continued in *Blade Runner 2049* (2017), directed by Denis Villeneuve.

The look of a visual narrative is tightly controlled from the beginning of the production design process. *Moulin Rouge!* (2001) was designed to be shot entirely on sound stages so that Baz Luhrmann could construct the Paris he imagined; realism was not part of this *mise en scène*.

Visual style is related to genre, to the work of film movements and to individual filmmakers. Those directors considered auteurs often use similar and instantly recognisable visual codes and conventions in their narratives. The works of Peter Greenaway, for example, are visually distinctive and quite different



Figure 9.34 *Moana* represents Western ideologies rather than Polynesian ones.



Figure 9.35 The New Zealand wilderness becomes a symbol of freedom in *Hunt for the Wilderpeople*.

by Taika Waititi, employed the contrast between the claustrophobic interior of a shack and the beauty of the New Zealand wilderness to suggest the physical and emotional entrapment of the main characters.

from those of Mike Leigh. Visual style also often reflects the culture and fashion of the time and place in which a text is made – try comparing the visual style of a Bollywood film with that of recent Australian films.

Set design, decoration and props, framing, lighting, colour and editing are all used to construct visual style. The different visual styles of film and TV are determined by the institutional contexts in which they are produced and distributed, including budget and production values, together with the selection of filmstock or videotape and the technologies particular to the medium.

Visual style also reveals the values and ideology of the time and place in which a film is made (but not always when and where it is set). The visual style of Disney animation *Moana* (2016), directed by John Musker and Ron Clements, says much more about life in the 21st-century West than in an ancient Polynesian world. It represents the ideology of individual effort rather than the cooperative lifestyle of the time and place in which the narrative was set.

Filmmakers usually try to achieve a consistent visual style for each text, although varying the style can be an effective narrative device. Contrast between scenes can be achieved through altering the visual style of the mise en scène. A common example is the use of cramped, cluttered interiors contrasted against vast natural landscapes. *Hunt for the Wilderpeople* (2016), directed

Activity 9.26 Visual style

Write a report that analyses the visual style of the texts you are studying:

- Describe how the visual style of your texts helps an audience understand and engage with the narrative.
- Do the texts have a visual style that can be linked to genre, film movements or the director?
- Analyse the visual style of both texts. What similarities and differences are there? How does each represent the institutional contexts of their production and distribution?
- What does the visual style of each text reveal about how ideology has shaped the narrative?

Mise en scène

This French expression, which literally means ‘putting into the scene’, describes every aspect of the visual composition within a shot. A text’s mise en scène is a complex set of codes and conventions that impacts on how audiences read story and production techniques. A major expressive tool for a director, mise en scène refers to the placement and movement of objects and characters within the frame, the construction of space, perspective and framing, contrast and juxtaposition, cinematographic style and technique, including the visual properties of film or videotape, colour and lighting, set, props, costume and make-up. Mise en scène is everything we see; it does not refer to editing, which is the order in which we see.

When analysing mise en scène, it is assumed that each element is placed deliberately and can be analysed in terms of how it suggests meaning. Such construction is readily apparent in the stills from films throughout this chapter. Take some time to analyse how each is constructed.

Directors often have a particular visual style that can be read from the mise en scène in their films, which becomes important when analysing a text as part of that director's work. Stanley Kubrick, for example, was well known for his use of symmetry and asymmetry in the construction of shots to indicate the state of order or disorder of characters and storyline. Baz Luhrmann is known for the lushness of his mise en scène and for the use of red to construct the passion that is part of his narratives.

One important aspect of mise en scène is the setting. A setting may be natural, as in the example from Daniel Nettheim's *The Hunter* (2011) in Figure 9.36, or it may be a set especially constructed for a scene or an entire film, as in *The Dressmaker*.

Photo courtesy of Magnolia Pictures



Image courtesy of Film Art Media, photographer Ben King

Figure 9.36 A setting may be natural, as was the Tasmanian bush in *The Hunter*, or it may be a set constructed for an entire film and then destroyed, as was the case for *The Dressmaker*.

Space and time: movement, repetition, rhythm and motif in mise en scène

A narrative text is much more than the sum of its parts, and this phenomenon is most apparent in the consideration of the roles that space and time play within a narrative. A narrative occurs in space over a period of time, but these two features are not used in isolation. In designing narratives to move through space and time, directors create patterns and rhythm through the insertion and repetition of places, events, actions, settings, colours, lighting and sound. This rhythm is important; it allows an audience to monitor the development of any narrative, adjusting their understanding of what has gone before and making predictions about how the narrative possibilities in the plot will be resolved.

Motif is an important aspect of narrative. A motif is a recurring element that suggests meaning beyond its literal meaning; it represents an idea. Motif may take the form of an object, character, colour, sound or action.

In *Moulin Rouge!*, contrasting aspects of Satine's character are suggested through two motifs: diamonds and birds. Satine, 'the sparkling diamond', sings that 'diamonds are a girl's best friend'. She is costumed in diamante and lit in cold blue diamond-like low-key lighting, to suggest that she is a precious, yet cold jewel. Even when planning to flee with Christian, the first thing she does is grab her jewellery. However, when Satine changes from her sparkling diamond costume, she puts on a feathered outfit and, while rising from the Moulin Rouge on her perch, she falls; this bird cannot 'fly away', as in her

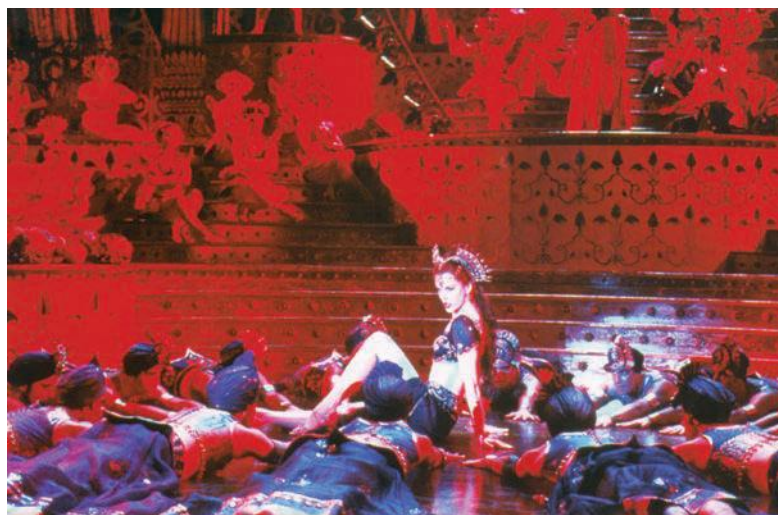


Figure 9.37 In *Moulin Rouge!*, Satine cannot fly away.

Alamy Stock Photo/Moviestore collection Ltd

dreams. When she learns of her illness, Satine is shot against a beautiful bird singing plaintively in its cage and the audience realises that she too is a bird in a gilded cage.

Motifs are often used as a symbol to foreshadow what is to come. Another aspect of narrative development, repeated visual and aural motifs inform audience knowledge, allowing us to predict the likely outcome of the narrative. Through the use of motifs, which may be subtle or overt, the audience is able to predict character and plot development, as well as the point of view of the filmmaker.

Activity 9.27 Mise en scène unpacked

Find or capture stills from each significant part of the narratives you are studying. There is some excellent free software available to help with this.

Choose a still from the opening, development, climax and closure of each narrative. Deconstruct each still in great detail, analysing everything within the frame to determine how it contributes to the narrative and its underlying message.

Create a visual presentation that illustrates your learning.

Tip: if each class member analyses a different shot, you will be able to compile a set of information that will be very useful when studying for your assessment tasks and the examination.

Costume and make-up

Costume and make-up are important aspects of production design and work in the same ways as other aspects of mise en scène to suggest meaning. Items of costume frequently become clues in narrative progression. Costume and make-up may confirm an audience's reading of a narrative, or undercut their expectation. Compare Darth Vader with Luke Skywalker in George Lucas's *Star Wars* (1977).

Costume and make-up provide information about time and place; they can reveal or hide character motivation and plot development. Costume design works on a literal and symbolic level, and can be overt or subtle in the way it suggests meaning. When Anita is explaining why she is leaving home in *Almost Famous*, the atmosphere is tense, yet the costume of each character contains the same colour red to suggest that Anita and her mother and brother are linked by blood and share the same passionate nature. The audience subconsciously reads this to mean that their troubles will eventually be resolved.

Costume forms an important part of both plot and character development in *The Dressmaker*. An extravagant and non-naturalistic aspect of the narrative, costumes form a code through which audiences read the motivations, successes and failures of each character.

Props often contribute to costume and make-up. Anyone who has ever seen a teen movie knows that when the nerdy girl removes her glasses and lets her hair down she will be transformed into the prom queen and win the handsome guy.

Activity 9.28 Costume and make-up as a narrative tool

Sketch some of the costumes worn by characters from the narratives you are studying. Annotate your drawings to explain how costume and make-up have been used to develop character and plot.

Cinematography

The shot

Cinema is a matter of what's in the frame and what's out.

Martin Scorsese

It has often been said that the best films are those in which every shot is a beautifully composed photograph, but this definition of the cinematographer's art – while true in terms of the composition of an individual shot – denies the very essence of film as a medium. Film and TV capture images in space and time. Cinematography differs from photography because it presents a moving image. Even when everything within a shot is absolutely still, there is still a sense of movement, because as anyone who has ever perched on the edge of their seat waiting for the on-screen lovers to finally kiss knows, the potential for movement can be as powerful as movement itself.

In narratives, the camera is rarely neutral; it positions the audience to read characters, locations or events subjectively. The construction of shots tells us about goodies and baddies, hope and fear, power and inequality, love and hate. It controls not only what is seen, but how it is seen. How does the selection, duration, focus and movement of shots construct meaning in narrative texts?

Shot selection

The director and cinematographer or director of photography work with the production team, including set and costume designers, lighting, make-up and special effects, to design and create the look of a narrative. They select the format, equipment and lenses they will need before deciding on exposure, framing and **blocking** for each shot. The tools at their disposal include: shot selection such as framing, camera angle, depth of field, shot duration and camera movement.



Figure 9.38 The camera is subjective in this still from *Girl Asleep* (2015), directed by Rosemary Myers.

Windmill Theatre Co.

Every time you talk about the look of the film, it's not just the director and director of photography.

Spike Lee, film director

The palette of shot sizes from which a filmmaker may choose is, in theory, quite limited. Shots are described as one of the following:

- Establishing shot: locates action in time and space. May also establish genre, mood and narrative possibilities.
- Extreme long shot: conveys location, but figures are too small to convey emotion.
- Long shot: figures are recognisable, but the location is the dominant feature of the frame.
- Mid or medium shot: figures are shot from about the waist up. Background is still a feature.
- Medium close-up: frames the figure from the chest up, invites attention to the character filling the frame.
- Close-up: the head or an object of interest fills the frame. Invites the audience to consider a character's emotion and motivation.
- Extreme close-up: frames a portion of a face or other significant bodily feature, or a significant part of an object.

See page 409 for examples.

Shots are also described by angle: low, high or straight-on (eye) level. The camera may tilt, pan or zoom. It may move via a crane, track, dolly or vehicle, or be hand-held. Lenses may portray action accurately, or they may distort a shot.

Each of the shot types and camera movements listed above works alone or in conjunction with other codes and conventions to engage an audience to construct meaning. Rhythm and pattern are established through the editing process and the use of non-visual story and production codes and conventions, such as story and character arcs.

In the first few minutes of a narrative, the establishing shot introduces one or more of the following: location, time, mood, characters or plot. This shot provides the audience with information to contextualise the opening and to grasp narrative possibilities as they arise. For each new location, a similar shot serves to contextualise narrative development.

Some principles of the shot

- The longer a camera lingers on a subject, the greater the importance of that subject in a narrative.
- More is more: the size of a character or object in a frame reveals much about the importance and/or dominance of that character or object within the narrative.
- Close-ups are about emotional engagement and revealing secrets.
- Framing suggests order and disorder: symmetrically composed frames indicate order, asymmetry and canted frames suggest disorder.
- Light and shadow suggest goodness and evil. This is true for locations, characters and action.
- Camera angles suggest dominance or submission.
- Smooth camera movements – pan, tilt, track, zoom – indicate control and/or order in a narrative. Jerky hand-held camera movements indicate disarray.
- Selective focus directs an audience to attend to the subject in focus and may raise questions about what – and why – they can't clearly see some parts of the frame.

The camera is powerful. The duration of a shot is a visual indicator of the importance of a character or object to the narrative. When used in conjunction with shot size and framing, it allows the filmmaker to convey additional information about plot and themes. Through the bird's-eye view that follows a dwarfed Volkswagen beetle along winding and increasingly treacherous mountain roads during the title sequence of *The Shining*, the audience learns that whoever is in the car is significant to the narrative, but is subordinated to the majesty of the mountainous location and is in great danger.

The camera lies all the time; lies 24 times/second.

Brian De Palma, film director

The relative power of characters is constructed through their size within a frame and the angle at which they are shot. Those who fill the frame similarly, with their eyelines at approximately the same height on the screen, are read by audiences to be relatively equal. Characters who do not fill the frame with the same physical bulk are understood to have lesser power. Of course, power may alter during the course of a scene or narrative and it is interesting to track this shift.

Shot selection commands an emotional response to characters, objects and action. Proximity to the camera is related to the emotion audiences are positioned to feel – a close-up demands a greater emotional response than a mid shot. The further from the camera the subject is, the less emotionally involved an audience is asked to be.

Activity 9.29 Character power in a single shot

Choose examples of characters in different shot types from each of the texts you have studied and analyse how the visual composition of the shots alone structures the character.

Sketch the shots, and annotate your diagrams to explain how and why each shot has been constructed. What was the filmmaker suggesting to the audience through the placement of characters within the shot?

As with Activity 9.27, by combining your analyses your class will create a powerful information bank to use when studying for the exam.

Visual narrative intensity

Most narratives are structured rhythmically, with the plot using alternating periods of quiet cause-and-effect development interspersed with minor climaxes or narrative triggers that build in intensity as the narrative progresses. These plot points vary in intensity, thus building a slow build-up to the final climax and resolution. Audiences enjoy the excitement of a climax but need space in the narrative to gather their thoughts and regroup before another one occurs.

Although it may not seem so when watching superhero films, narratives are not simply constructed as a continuous series of fight scenes full of shocking blood and gore. Audiences cannot maintain the emotional energy required to cope with such intensity. They may become exhausted or desensitised and turn off altogether. Directors must structure the development of narrative intensity to guide the audience to the final climax. Highlights in narrative intensity often occur at the intersection of multiple storylines, causing the narrative to move in new or unexpected directions.

Narrative intensity is manipulated using codes and conventions related to image and sound design. Contrasting line, shape, tone, colour and/or movement within the frame tend to increase narrative intensity, either complementing or contrasting with the plot, action or other narrative cues. On the other hand, the more harmonious these elements are and the more they complement the action, the less intense the narrative becomes.

Film producer and academic Bruce Block outlines his theory of narrative intensity like this:

The greater the contrast in a visual component, the more the visual intensity or dynamic increases. The greater the affinity in a visual component, the more the visual intensity or dynamic decreases. More simply stated:

CONTRAST = GREATER VISUAL INTENSITY

AFFINITY = LESS VISUAL INTENSITY

Stills from Sofia Coppola's *Lost in Translation* (2003), below, illustrate Block's theory.



Figure 9.39 Analyse the visual intensity of each shot, including the placement of characters and the design of colour and lighting. What do you think each image is trying to say about the narrative intensity of the scene?

Sound design also uses the principle of contrast and affinity to develop narrative intensity. Try listening to film and TV narratives with the picture obscured to understand how this works.

Like all aspects of narrative, studying intensity in isolation of other narrative elements is of little practical use. It is the interplay between a range of elements that builds a narrative.

Activity 9.30 Narrative intensity deconstructed

- 1 Capture a range of stills from significant plot points in the texts you are studying. Analyse each in terms of how the visual construction of these images contributes to the narrative.
- 2 Create an audio analysis that illustrates the use of sound in building narrative intensity.

Camera movement

Camera movement allows an audience to follow the action, to track a character or to see events from a different perspective. Used alone or in combination with editing, camera movement can convey emotion, harmony or discord. In some texts, the camera is continually moving – a spectacular example of this is *Russian Ark* (2002), directed by Aleksandr Sokurov, which was shot in one fluid take. In *Birdman*, director Alejandro González Iñárritu and cinematographer Emmanuel Lubezki privileged



Figure 9.40 Hitchcock's famous dolly zoom in *Vertigo*

protagonist Riggan's point of view by simulating one continuous take as the camera tracks him through the St James Theatre and the streets of New York where the film was set. This technique represented the labyrinth of Riggan's mind, forcing audiences to witness his stress, breakdown, ultimate redemption and release. The film won the Academy Awards for Best Picture and Cinematography in 2014.

Cinema is not an excuse for illustrated literature.

David Lynch, film director

Often the camera is static in terms of framing characters, yet movement is achieved through the device of the camera and actors moving together through space at the same rate, the most common example of this being a camera attached to a vehicle. Much of Ridley Scott's *Thelma and Louise* (1991) was shot in this manner. Filmmakers choose this effect when they want to emphasise the idea of characters moving through a journey.

Movement can be implied through the use of the zoom function. This technique can be especially disconcerting if a character is moving through the frame and the camera is tracking at the same time. Hitchcock is famous for his use of a dolly zoom, where the camera simultaneously zooms in while tracking backwards, in *Vertigo* (1958). Follow the weblink to see it in a visual essay.

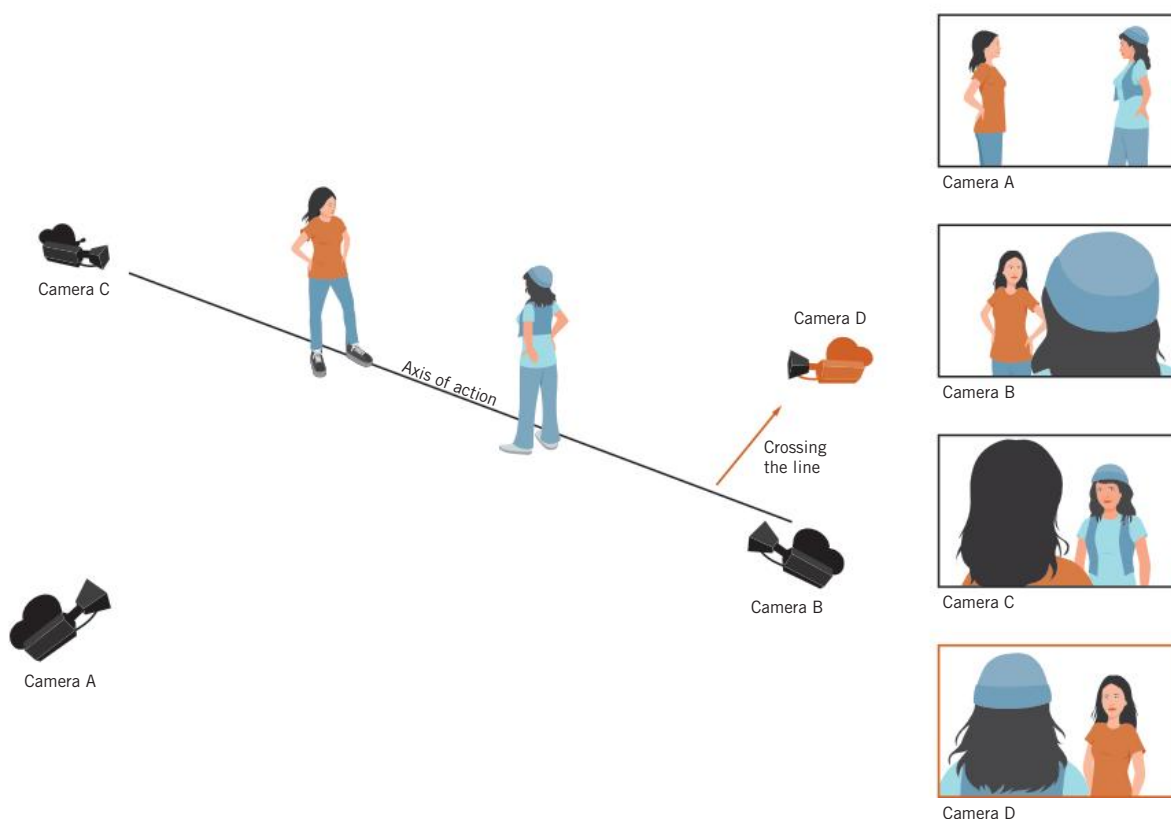


The 180-degree rule

The **axis of action** is an imaginary line drawn between the two main characters or sources of action in a film or TV narrative. The camera always stays on the same side of this line.

Sometimes referred to as 'crossing the line', this aspect of shot selection and/or camera movement orients an audience to the action by ensuring a consistent vantage point.

Imagine a line drawn between the two main sources of action or characters. This is called the 'axis of action'. The 180-degree rule states that all cameras should be located on one side of the axis of action.



Focus

The manipulation of focus, more correctly termed **depth of field**, refers to that part of the frame in which the image is sharp. The cinematographer selects the depth of field by choosing an appropriate aperture to achieve focus in the foreground, middle ground or background. This 'selective focus' is useful for drawing attention to characters, action or objects. **Deep focus** is the term used when everything within the frame is sharp.

Pull focus is employed to draw attention to a character or object on which the director wants an audience to concentrate. The focus in these shots moves from one character or object to another. This mimics the human eye, which selectively focuses on the object of interest, meaning we rarely notice that everything else in our field of vision is out of focus; when we select a different subject, the point of focus changes too.

Activity 9.31 Analysing the power of the camera

Select two or three scenes from each of your texts where you believe that the camera is the dominant tool used to construct meaning. Choose scenes that effectively use the following:

- shot selection
- camera movement
- focus.

Use the principles of shot construction to analyse how the camera works independently of and interdependently with other codes and conventions to structure meaning in the scenes you have chosen. Prepare an illustrated oral presentation on your findings.

Lighting

The art of lighting lies in its ability to express ideas. Lighting employs visual codes and conventions that control the audience's sense of space within a frame to structure meaning. Lighting can suggest movement, time and place. Lighting not only allows an audience to see the action, it shapes and frames this action, drawing attention to objects, characters and actions – thus illuminating the storyworld both literally and metaphorically. The colour, hue, saturation, intensity, quality, source and direction of light position an audience to read a shot or scene in a particular way.

Lighting may be described as high- or low-key, hard, soft or diffused, warm or cool and may be enhanced with filters or gels on set or applied in post-production.

The most basic lighting set-up is the three-point system, comprising:

- a key light, which is placed to the front and side of the subject on which the camera is focused
- fill light, which illuminates the remainder of the shot, and
- back light, to distinguish the subject from the background and eliminate shadows.

There are two main lighting designs: high-key or low-key.

- High-key lighting refers to a bright and evenly lit scene with few shadows. This lighting is common in film and TV texts with domestic themes, such as romantic comedies, sitcoms and soaps.
- Low-key lighting is used expressively and is designed to create contrast within the frame, emphasising pools of light, shadows and darkness.

With the exception of Dogme films, almost all films are artificially lit. In the construction of film and TV narratives, much energy and expense is devoted to making most scenes appear natural; that is, as we imagine they would look in real life. This is termed 'naturalistic lighting'. Yet this apparent realism is misleading; life is rarely lit in the same way as visual narratives. The very fact that the lighting is naturalistic may be suggestive in itself.

'Expressive lighting' is the term used to describe the construction of the lighting design intended to deliberately and non-naturalistically emphasise or draw attention to mood, character, motif, location, ideas and/or themes.

Modern filmmakers are able to employ an enormous number of technological solutions to lighting their images, but the principles of naturalistic and expressive lighting were established early in the history of film.

In *The Shining*, Jack's descent into madness is mirrored by naturalistic lighting. Beginning warm and bright, as winter draws in, the lighting moves to the cold blue hue of the snow that traps Jack and his family. This harsh sidelight, apparently from windows, serves to emphasise Jack's costume and make-up, which become increasingly unkempt. At the same time, Wendy and Danny continue to be

shot largely in warm, artificially lit interiors, suggesting that they retain their humanity. The lighting is so suggestive in this film that the audience begins to fear for Wendy and Danny's safety when they must venture into the cold locations representing Jack's insanity. Even the bright white light of the bathroom becomes expressive as he breaks down the door and the audience imagines how red Wendy's blood will look splashed across the walls.

Expressive lighting uses metaphor, simile and analogy to suggest meaning. Colour, tone and temperature are important aspects of expressive lighting. A character is lit from behind, making them glow – perhaps they are the angel that will save the situation. Another character's face is shaded on one side, to suggest this character's dark inner self, or that the character has two sides to their personality. Lighting can be used as a pool in which the action is enveloped. When lit from below, a character appears deathly; from above, they may be spotlight by God.

The filmmaker's point of view and the underlying ideology that informs the narrative is often apparent by the way a shot is lit. Why is the future so often represented as harsh and blue-toned? What are filmmakers suggesting? A short walk from one room to another can be transformed into an epic journey of self-discovery as a character turns from the evil represented by darkness and embraces the light.

When *Moulin Rouge*'s Harold Zidler tells Satine 'We are creatures of the underworld, we can't afford to love', he is lit as if by a fire. One side of his face is in shadow; the other glows red from a flickering light. Is Zidler lying? Is he the devil incarnate, or is his ruddy complexion the product of his life of excess? The lighting suggests all three possibilities, but the blue filter applied to Satine's face reveals that she knows he is telling the truth.

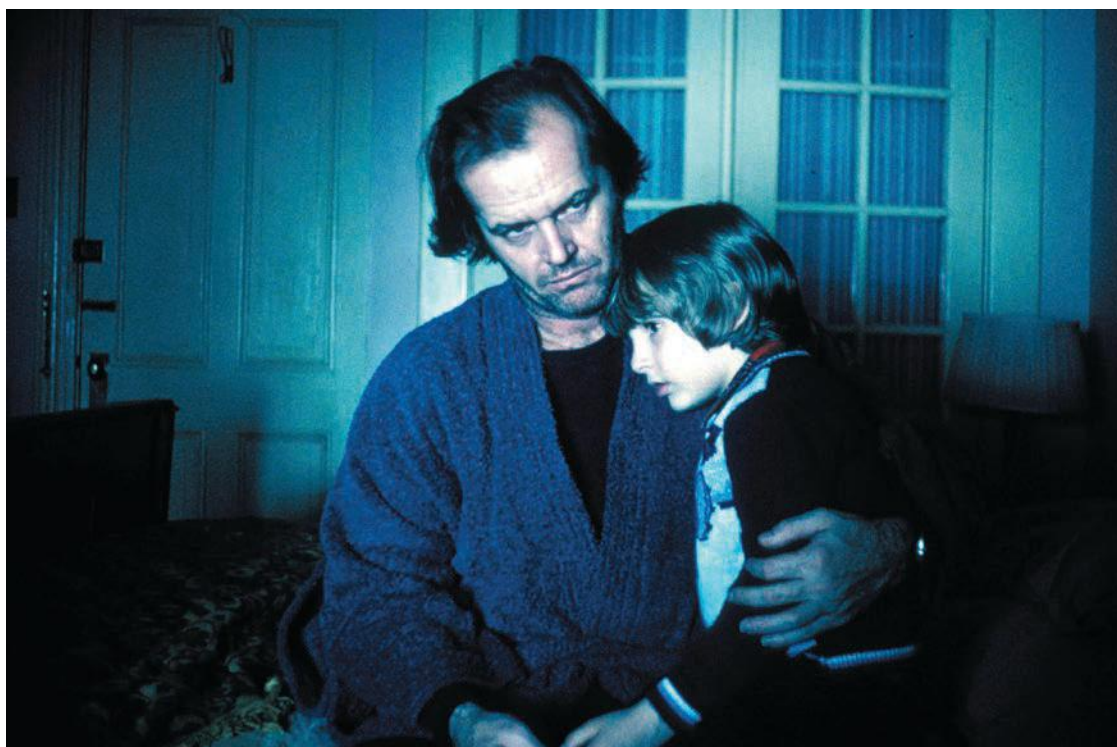


Figure 9.41 In *The Shining*, the harsh, cold, blue sidelight serves to emphasise Jack's costume and make-up, which become increasingly unkempt.

Activity 9.32 The illusion of naturalism

Find scenes in your texts where the lighting appears natural. Pause the scene on a representative shot, and conduct a close analysis of the shot to determine how it is lit:

- Look for sources of light, unlikely beams, the presence and absence of shadows, colour and tone that could not have been present on the set.
- Sketch the shot in your workbook, noting the sources of light. Try drawing a lighting plan for the shot.
- Analyse the shot and write notes about how the lighting suggests meaning to an audience.

Activity 9.33 Lighting the story

Select three or four key scenes from each text you are studying. Choose scenes that illustrate some or all of the following:

- establishment of plot
- establishment of main characters
- the importance of minor characters to the plot
- the themes of the text
- the point of view from which the narrative is positioned
- the climax and resolution.

Analyse each scene in terms of how the lighting is designed to suggest or support meaning, and write a report that compares and contrasts the use of lighting in both texts. Remember to use the correct technical terms in your analysis.

Film noir

Of all film genres – or, as it is more correctly classified, movements – film noir is claimed to have the most stylistic expressive lighting.

Popular in the 1940s and 1950s, film noir primarily encompasses the thriller and crime genres, although elements of noir can be found in many films of the time. Films noirs were at the time regarded as B-grade texts. Storylines usually involved murder, betrayal and infidelity. Thematically, they dealt with anxiety and dread, which were expressed in storylines and through characters who were often stylised and trapped in prisons of their own making.

Male characters were morally ambiguous flawed loners, whose life experiences had left them hoping for the best but expecting the worst. Female characters were defined by their sexuality as either *femmes fatales* – the spider-women who lured unsuspecting men into their web – or as pure-hearted nurturers.

Film noir is characterised by a homogeneous visual style in which dark and dangerous rain-washed city streets provide the opportunity for crime and corruption. Camera techniques suggest tension through unbalanced framing and extreme angles.

The lighting in film noir reflects its themes. **Chiaroscuro** low-key lighting creates deep shadows in which characters can physically and metaphorically hide; their motivation and actions thus obscured.

Films noirs always reflect the ideological contexts of the time and place of their production. In recent years, 'neo-noir' is the term that has been used to describe texts that have brought modern concerns to the style.

Films noirs you may like to look out for include:

- *The Maltese Falcon* (1941), directed by John Huston
- *Double Indemnity* (1944), directed by Billy Wilder
- *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1946), directed by Tay Garnett, and (1981), directed by Bob Rafelson
- *The Third Man* (1949), directed by Carol Reed



Film-still from 'The Third Man' (b/w photo) / Private Collection / Bridgeman Images



Blade Runner 2049, Alamy Stock Photo/Atlaspix

Figure 9.42 The nights are always dark in films noirs.





- *Strangers on a Train* (1951), directed by Alfred Hitchcock
- *The Big Heat* (1953), directed by Fritz Lang
- *Taxi Driver* (1976), directed by Martin Scorsese
- *Body Heat* (1981), directed by Lawrence Kasdan
- *Blade Runner* (1982), directed by Ridley Scott, and *Blade Runner 2049* (2017), directed by Denis Villeneuve
- *Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid* (1982), directed by Carl Reiner
- *LA Confidential* (1997), directed by Curtis Hanson
- *Sin City* (2005), directed by Robert Rodriguez and Frank Miller
- *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang* (2005), directed by Shane Black
- *No Country for Old Men* (2007), directed by Joel and Ethan Coen
- *Watchmen* (2009), directed by Zack Snyder
- *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* (2011), directed by David Fincher
- *Inherent Vice* (2014), directed by Paul Thomas Anderson

Editing

Editing is the essence of cinema.

Francis Ford Coppola, film director

Editing refers to the selection and joining together of vision and sound. Editing organises texts by uniting footage rhythmically and aesthetically to create meaning by establishing spatial and temporal relationships between shots. The relationship between shots creates the chain of events in cause-and-effect relationships occurring in space and time that is narrative.

Editing has its own codes and conventions, which are well known to audiences and editors and serve to unite shots in four ways:

- Vision: when shots are joined, they match in terms of colour and composition.
- Rhythm: audiences perceive the pattern of a narrative and understand what to expect of it.
- Space: audiences understand where each shot is located within a scene and where each scene is in the world of the story.
- Time: audiences understand the placement of the shot in terms of the development of the storyline.

The Kuleshov Effect

Between 1910 and 1920, Soviet filmmaker Lev Kuleshov experimented with editing shots together to suggest meaning or create emotion in the audience. By juxtaposing different images between neutral shots, he was able to show that audiences can infer meaning. His work has come to be known as the Kuleshov Effect. You can view Kuleshov's original short film online. What do you think is implied by each of the sequences that Kuleshov constructed? It is reported that at showings the audience raved about the male actor's performance. You can also find a video of Alfred Hitchcock discussing the use of this editing effect online.

Most narratives use the principle of continuity editing; that is, arranging a sequence of shots to suggest a logical and 'natural' progression of events in time or space. Continuity editing does not draw attention to itself, thereby creating a sense of realism in its representation of the action. The 180-degree rule is a standard editing technique that supports continuity editing.

Editors sometimes like to break the rules of continuity editing to startle an audience or to point out special features of a character or situation. The most common techniques are to speed up or slow down the action, or to repeat action from different camera angles: the well-known 'superhero effect'.

Editors not only create structure but also emotion and rhythm. Typically, pace and rhythm change as narrative intensity changes. Audiences expect pace and rhythm to increase as a narrative moves towards its climax, but this is not always the case. Occasionally, an editor may choose to slow the pace to position an audience to read subtle nuances within the action, a technique often used by Quentin Tarantino. Find examples in your texts where manipulating the speed in the editing process suggests how an audience might read a scene.

Editing feels almost like sculpting or a form of continuing the writing process.

Sydney Pollack, film director

The editor's toolbox

Editors use a set of basic techniques to construct meaning from raw footage. When analysing your texts, you will use this language to describe what you see and hear and how it suggests meaning.

- **Cut:** the point at which one shot ends and another begins.
- **Fade:** one shot fades into another, or into black or white or (rarely) a colour.
- **Crossfade:** the term for one soundtrack fading into another.
- **Dissolve:** one shot gradually dissolves into another.
- **Wipe:** one shot wipes another from the screen.
- **Jump cut:** a cut from one shot to another that does not visually match.
- **Action match:** the opposite of a jump cut, this cut creates spatial and visual logic between shots, making the action appear smooth.
- **Eyeline match:** a cut from a character looking at something to the object being looked at; also refers to the matching of the way characters fill the screen in shot/reverse shot editing. Eyeline match creates realism through the premise that an audience will want to see what a character is looking at.
- **Cutting on action:** cutting from one shot to another view that carries or matches a movement and gives the impression of a continuous time span.
- **Shot/reverse angle shot:** the second shot looks back from where the first shot originated; often used when editing conversation; may include over-the-shoulder shots.
- **Cross-cut or parallel editing:** cutting between two sets of action occurring at the same time but in different locations.
- **Cutaway:** the shot is related to but not part of the action.
- **Cut in:** a cut to tighter framing of the action.
- **Superimposition:** the addition of text, images or symbols over footage.
- **Ellipsis:** the foreshortening of plot duration.
- **Manipulation of speed:** altering the speed of action by slowing it down or speeding it up.
- **Montage:** rapid editing to create a strong visual impression from a variety of shots, which may be used singly or in repetition.

In many ways editing is trying to understand the director's vision and then to surprise the director by going further than their vision.

Jill Bilcock, Australian award-winning film editor of various titles, including all of Baz Luhrmann's Red Curtain Trilogy, Sam Mendes's *Road to Perdition* (2002) and *Red Dog* (2011), directed by Kriv Stenders

Of course, editing is much more than cutting and arranging film. Colour grading and correction and post-production work, including the addition of effects, speed and the manipulation of sound, are also involved.

Colour grading has a psychological effect on an audience's reading of a narrative. By manipulating colour, the filmmaker suggests a preferred reading of the text. We are all familiar with the golden tones of Westerns and the desaturated dark tones of dystopian science-fiction narratives; they are common codes to suggest meaning.

Ideologies are also expressed through colour. An extreme example is the different uses of the colour red in texts as diverse as *Schindler's List* (1993), directed by Steven Spielberg, and *American Beauty* (1999), directed by Sam Mendes.

PRACTICAL TIP

The language of editing contains a lot of technical terms. Create an online quiz like Kahoot! to test yourself and your friends!





Figure 9.43 Colour and colour grading suggest meaning in *American Beauty*.

Activity 9.34 Using the language of editing

Look for scenes in your texts that illustrate both continuity editing and discontinuous editing. Study scenes in detail, noting:

- shot selection – extreme long shot, long shot, mid shot, medium close-up, close-up, extreme close-up
- the range of editing techniques
- the length of each shot
- how the editing of sound and vision work together
- the effect of each cut on the construction of meaning.

Write an illustrated analysis of the scenes you have selected, describing how the combination of the above elements engages an audience.

Sound

The easy familiarity with which audiences quote lines from their favourite narratives, such as ‘Hasta la vista, baby!’ or ‘Chewie, we’re home’, together with the popularity of commercially released film soundtracks, indicates the importance of sound in film and TV narratives. In audiovisual productions, the term ‘soundtrack’ refers to all types of sound accompanying the visuals within a text.

Sound may be analysed using the following terms:

- diegetic sound
- non-diegetic sound
- sound over
- sound bridge
- simultaneous and non-simultaneous sound
- dialogue
- voice-over
- music
- silence
- special effects/FX.

Other factors that come into play when analysing the impact of sound on narrative are the relationship between sound and image, the qualities of sound within the narrative and the important aspect of audience reception.

Audiences take great pleasure in the soundtrack of their narratives, happily suspending disbelief and colluding with the filmmaker to pretend that everything they hear comes directly from the action. With a good understanding of the codes and conventions of narrative sound design audiences rarely give any thought to notions of literal realism, preferring to be swept up in the narrative experience. The soundtrack creates depth in a narrative, and sound design is an important part of the production process. Every aspect of sound, from the delivery of dialogue to effects and even music playing in the background of a scene, can point to the ideologies that have informed a narrative. Each can be analysed to determine the links between the text and the context in which it was produced.



Figure 9.44 Sound is an important motif in *Noise*.

Activity 9.35 Listen to your texts

When we buy a commercial soundtrack, we are often amazed to find tracks that we have never heard before – or so we think. Yet, when we watch the film or TV narrative again, we discover that we have heard the track, we just hadn't noticed it. This activity aims to get you seeing your texts in a different light – by not looking at them at all.

- Make yourself comfortable and hide the screen.
- Listen to your texts in their entirety. If you have surround sound, all the better. At first it will be easy, but after a few minutes you are likely to become frustrated or distracted. Try not to give in to these feelings.
- As you are listening to your texts, you will gradually become aware of subtleties in the way the sound has been constructed, such as music, sound effects, editing, rhythm and repetition. Take note of these.

Write a report on your experience, commenting on how sound combines with plot, character, narrative intensity and themes to engage an audience.

Diegetic and non-diegetic sound

Sound may be described as diegetic (originating from the world of the narrative), or as non-diegetic (from a source outside the narrative).

Diegetic sound includes everything that a character within a narrative can hear (such as dialogue), the sounds that would naturally occur within the storyworld (such as street and domestic sounds) and music emanating from the setting (for example, music coming from a band or radio).

Non-diegetic sound is all sound that characters would not be able to hear in their storyworld.

Non-diegetic sound includes music not emanating from the world of the narrative, sound effects and voice-over. It is sometimes referred to as 'sound over'.

Sound bridge

Dialogue or sound commonly link one scene with the next. This is termed a 'sound bridge'. Sound may continue from one scene into the next scene, or begin before a scene has finished, thus providing continuity within the narrative. Image and sound rarely begin and end simultaneously with the beginning or end of a scene, although this technique may be employed to break narrative continuity – indicating the end of one section of a narrative and the introduction of the next. This was the case when switching from present to past in *The Social Network* (2010), directed by David Fincher.

Simultaneous and non-simultaneous sound

Sound and vision are usually linked; that is, sound occurs simultaneously with the vision on screen. Non-simultaneous sound is a technique where sound from another part of the narrative is used non-diegetically to remind an audience about what has gone before, or to foreshadow what is to come. Common non-simultaneous sounds include voice-over of a character's thoughts or memories, narration and musical themes or motifs.

The Foley artist

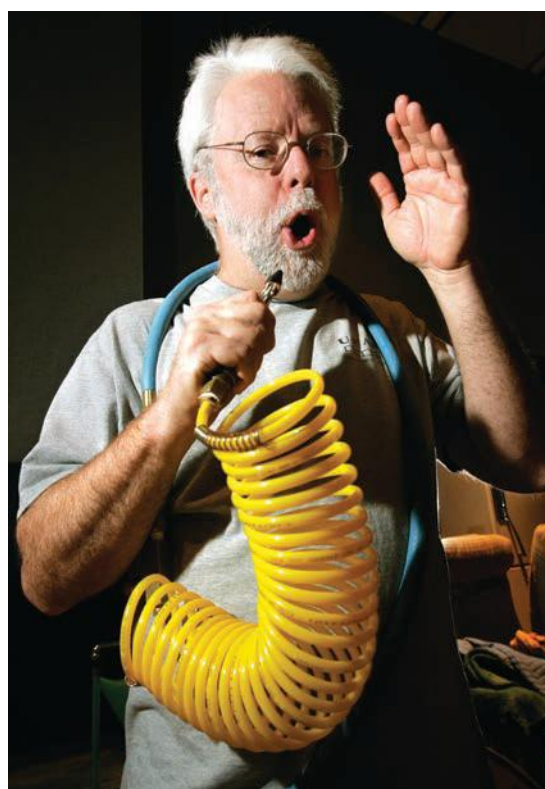
A **Foley artist** 'recreates' sound for film, TV and radio. Working on a Foley stage with a range of props and tools, the Foley artist creates a range of sounds to replace or augment the sound recorded on the soundtrack.

A narrative may be set on a beach, in a spaceship, on a crowded street or in a car, but whether on location or on set a sound recordist can rarely capture the sound with the richness and accuracy demanded by audiences. On set, nothing is as solid as it appears, and on location ambient sound is often overwhelming.

The placement of cameras and microphones cannot ensure consistent sound, and in post-production actors often re-record sections of dialogue – a process called 'looping' or 'automated dialogue replacement'. Of course, when this is done, the sounds recorded on the original soundtrack are missing. This is where the Foley artist comes in – recreating footsteps, opening doors, a character rolling over in bed, punches, falls and the sound of fingernails on a blackboard so familiar in narratives set in schools. Foley artists recreate sound; they do not create explosions, light sabres, jet fighters or tidal waves – this is the job of the sound effects editor.

The term 'Foley artist' is named after Jack Foley, one of the original practitioners of this art, who worked on the first sound feature film, *The Jazz Singer* (1927), directed by Alan Crosland.

To see a Foley artist at work, watch *Gary Hecker – Veteran Foley Artist* or, for a more creative approach, this beautiful tribute in short film form, *The Secret World of Foley*.



Getty Images/Mel Melcon/Los Angeles Times



Weblink

Dialogue

Dialogue is all the words spoken by actors. Dialogue is almost always scripted, although occasionally unscripted dialogue is used to give actors freedom to improvise to develop their character. When studying the impact of dialogue, it is important to analyse the contribution of both the shooting script and the actor. An actor's toolbox includes volume, pace, pitch, timbre and rhythm (see 'Acting' on page 281). Each is manipulated to suggest meanings that words alone cannot or do not suggest. Actors may be selected for a role based on the quality of their voice – think of the majesty that Alec Guinness brings to the role of Ben Obi-Wan Kenobi in the *Star Wars* films, directed by George Lucas, or Jane Horrocks as Bubble in *Absolutely Fabulous* (1992), directed by Bob Spiers.

Voice-over

Many narratives employ a voice-over, or narrator, to provide background, reveal information or comment on the on-screen action. Narration can be a powerful tool to frame the narrative. It positions the audience to understand what they see and hear subjectively, from the point of view of the narrator and, by inference, reflect the underlying message of the narrative. A narrator may be reliable (truthful) or

unreliable (bending the storyline to their own advantage), as in *Shutter Island* (2010), directed by Martin Scorsese. A voice-over may comprise a character from the plot commenting, reflecting or reminiscing, or an **omniscient** narrator who appears to be in control of the narrative.

Voice-overs influence an audience's response to the narrative. Voice-over can also be used by filmmakers to save money or to rescue an incoherent narrative. Too often, it is an easy way out of a narrative hole. In *Gattaca*, for example, Vincent's voice-over is unnecessary and panders to an audience who wants an easy film-going experience.

Music

Music is incorporated into narratives diegetically and non-diegetically. The first experience of music in most narratives occurs in the title sequence; the last accompanies the credits sequence. Both frame a narrative, inviting an audience into and leading them out of the narrative journey, establishing and resolving mood, issues and narrative possibilities. Some title sequences act as musical overtures, introducing musical themes and motifs that will recur throughout the text. Similarly, some credits sequences use musical cues to recap highlights from the plot.

Narratives commonly use musical themes and leitmotifs associated with characters and ideas. The shark theme from Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* (1975) is well known, but most themes are more subtle. In *Almost Famous*, Elton John's 'Tiny Dancer' is first heard early in the film, as characters resolve their difficulties after a dispute. The tune begins apparently non-diegetically as sound over the action; however, it soon becomes apparent that this song is being played on a stereo system as, one by one, the characters begin to sing along. The tune becomes a theme of reconciliation when used again non-diegetically in the lead-up to the climax.

Incidental music is usually non-diegetic and is used to provide a sound background or to support, emphasise or contrast with the action. Incidental music may take the form of a complete composition, or it may be a simple motif. Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000), while visually stunning, would not have been complete without the use of beautiful incidental music.

When music that contrasts with the on-screen action is juxtaposed against vision, the effect is to heighten the impact of either the visuals or the sound, or both. The simple two-note shark theme in *Jaws* works this way by emphasising the danger the unsuspecting swimmers are facing, cuing audience anticipation of the next attack. Perhaps the most stunning musical themes today are those created by Hans Zimmer, who composes for fictional and non-fiction narratives in film and TV, including *The Dark Knight* (2008), *The Edge of Seventeen* (2016) and *Dunkirk* (2017). Visit his website for examples of his work.

Sound motifs and themes do not necessarily have to be musical. Any sound, whether natural or artificial, may be used to construct a motif. Wind, waves, bells, mechanical noises, moaning, animals and voices are commonly used – alone or in conjunction with vision – to suggest meaning.

Sound design and production involves creating rhythmic aural patterns to support the plot and visual construction. Rhythm is not simply related to music, but is also associated with every aspect of narrative sound.

The most exciting moment is the moment when I add the sound ... At this moment, I tremble.

Akira Kurosawa, film director



Figure 9.45 *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, while visually stunning, would not have been complete without the use of beautiful incidental music.

Activity 9.36 Sound themes and motifs

Create a list of sounds that are associated with each of the main characters in your texts. Now create another list of sounds, this time sounds that are used to convey ideas and emotions in your texts.

How are these sounds used to contribute to character and plot development?

Activity 9.37 Sound and narrative intensity

To illustrate the ways in which sound is used rhythmically to support plot, create another overlay for the narrative intensity graphs you created for Activity 9.11.

Use different colours to graph the following sound elements as they occur throughout each text:

- musical themes and motifs associated with:
 - plot
 - characters
 - themes
- volume
- intensity and complexity in the soundtrack.

Note how the soundtrack works interdependently with vision, either by supporting it or contrasting with it to create meaning.

Sound perspective

Sound perspective describes the apparent spatial relationship between sound and image that is perceived by audiences in three dimensions.

Sound perspective and the quality of sound are increasingly important in these days of audiences who expect atmospheric surround sound in the cinema and at home; they literally want to be moved by the sound of their narratives.

The impact of digital sound has led to complete control of narrative sound and, increasingly, sound may be described by its three-dimensional qualities. An empty room is no longer simply an empty room; the room has atmosphere and is imbued with a quality that suggests meaning. Audiences are positioned to join a character who is alone on a darkened street, experiencing the quality of her isolation through the sounds that surround her, even entering her head to feel the fear in her heartbeat. Sound creates layers of meaning.

Silence is the tool against which all other qualities of sound are measured in film, and this is also increasingly the case for TV narratives. The quality of sound and of its absence are important in films as diverse as *The Road to Perdition* (2002), directed by Sam Mendes, *No Country for Old Men* (2007), directed by Joel and Ethan Coen, and *Wall-E* (2008), directed by Andrew Stanton.

Activity 9.38 Sounds of silence

How is silence used in the texts you are studying?

Find a scene in which the absence of sound is used to create meaning. Write notes about how this scene is constructed and about the quality of the sound.

- What is happening?
- What is the effect of silence on audience expectation and emotional involvement?
- Is silence created through the absence of dialogue and music, or is it a product of the way in which dialogue is delivered?
- Are distant sounds used to emphasise the lack of sound in a location?
- If you are studying an older text, compare the quality of sound with modern examples from the same genre.

Acting

When audiences remember narratives, they do not think of acting but of character. Try it now. Think about the protagonist in your favourite film or television narrative. What comes to mind? It is likely that you will have created an image of the character; you will recall how the character looks, speaks and moves. You may remember the character as they appear in a particular scene, in which case you will recall the character moving through the scene reacting to the events that befall them; that is, participating in the cause-and-effect relationship that is narrative.

Characters are created through a combination of visual and aural codes and conventions related to story and production, including screenplay costume, make-up, setting and acting. Vision includes movement, body language, gestures and facial expressions. Aspects of voice delivery – such as projection, accent, inflection, pitch, timbre, tone, pace and emphasis – are also important in the creation of character. Under direction, an actor may bring realism or any of a range of expressive or stylised acting styles to the production. Over the years acting styles have changed dramatically. Acting that would have been considered natural in the mid-20th century would today be considered highly theatrical and unrealistic.

Actors

In casting, the director considers the body of work already undertaken by an actor. Actors become associated with particular styles and genres; audiences come to a narrative armed with this knowledge and use it when they see that an actor has been cast in a text. Think about Bryan Cranston, Leonardo DiCaprio, Joel Edgerton, Ryan Gosling, Lupita Nyong'o, Nicole Kidman, Frances McDormand, Toni Collette, Dwayne Johnson and Ian McKellen. Each has a very different body of work with which they are associated. Can you imagine Frances McDormand and Joel Edgerton playing opposite each other in a romantic comedy? What about Nicole Kidman and Ian McKellen as superheroes? No-one else can imagine it either, which is why these actors are never cast in such roles.

It is important to consider both acting and actors when studying narrative. The casting of Michael Keaton in *Birdman* was a stroke of genius. In this **metanarrative**, Keaton, an actor who once starred as Batman but turned down the opportunity to make a third film in the series, is cast as a washed-up ex-superhero-playing actor trying to reinvent himself. Audiences read *Birdman* with the knowledge of Keaton's career, which brings depth and pathos to his role.



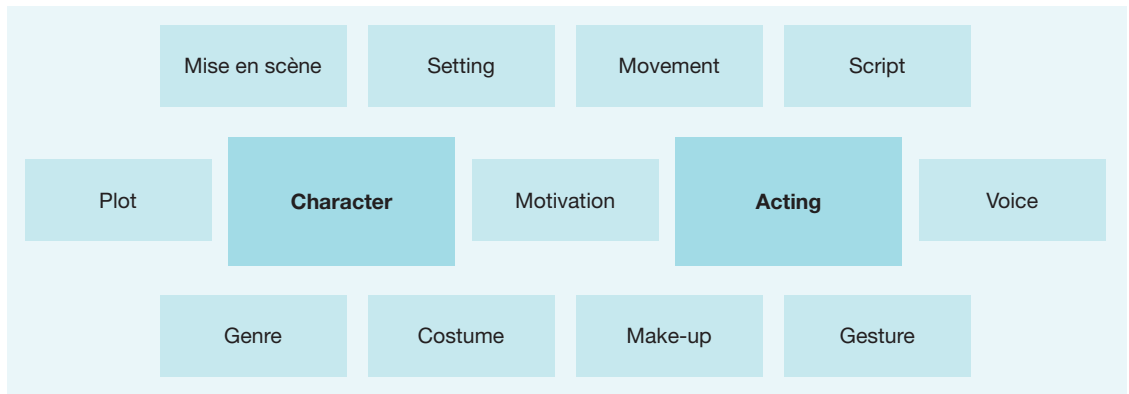
Figure 9.46 Life imitates art in *Birdman*.

Activity 9.39 Mapping character: acting in context

When analysing a narrative, it may help to separate the elements that the director and actor use to create character.

Use the following diagram to create a concept map that illustrates the relationship between the codes and conventions that create character in the texts you are studying. How important is acting in this relationship? What contribution does the casting of each actor bring to the narrative?





Production values

Production values refer to the aesthetics and quality of presentation of a text and the way these are reflected in a text's construction. Production values are the result of the institutional context in which a text is produced and distributed and often reflect the ideology of this time and place. A big-budget Hollywood motion picture is said to have high production values, while most student films have low production values; but production values do not measure or describe emotional, social or intellectual value.

All aspects of production, from the screenplay through production and post-production, are included when discussing production values. A text with high production values looks like it was expensive to make because it was. The sets don't wobble and the audience is not constantly reminded of poor writing, shooting or editing; it appears seamless.

It is possible that a text with low production values may make clever use of limited resources to produce a compelling quality narrative or a funnily ironic postmodern text. More often, however, low production values mean low quality. Not only do the sets wobble, so does the plot.

However, as we all know, money does not buy class and there are plenty of texts that prove this rule, where millions have been spent but the text is still a dud. Film buffs all have their favourite high-budget flops, and for many it is Kevin Costner's *Waterworld* (1995). What's yours?

Activity 9.40 Evaluating the impact of production values

- 1 Examine your narrative texts in terms of their production values:
 - a How is the money spent on producing these texts reflected in the quality of the narrative?
 - b Estimate the contribution of production values to audience expectation, consumption and reading of the texts.
 - c Production values impact on a text's apparent realism. Does the text take the audience on a journey that, even if to imaginary places, feels authentic?
 - d What is the relationship between each narrative's production values and the ideological context in which they were created?
- 2 Write a short report that examines the relationship between production values and audience engagement with each narrative.

AUDIENCE AND THE CONTEXTS OF CONSUMPTION

What contribution does an audience bring to the narrative experience? The importance of consuming a text in the manner intended by the creator was discussed earlier, but what is the role of the audience in constructing narrative?

Have you ever visited a cinema with no idea about the film you were about to see? Very few patrons arrive at the box office asking for 'a ticket for a movie, please!' Most people plan their cinema experiences by gathering information from trailers, reviews or advertising. Some movie buffs follow the career of their favourite directors or actors, while others rely on mates to give them the good oil on what is worth seeing. Almost everyone arrives at the cinema with some knowledge of and expectations about the film they plan to see.

Audience expectation of TV narratives works slightly differently. In addition to the above influences, factors such as patterns of domestic life and knowledge of earlier episodes contribute to the decision to watch a particular program. The introduction of streamed media has significantly altered consumption,

with audiences anticipating programs that are released on the same day worldwide or binge-watching entire series.

The difference between audience expectations of films, DVDs, pay, streamed and free-to-air TV is also apparent in the length of time an audience will give a text before deciding on its worth. The bottom line is that the more money, effort and time someone spends on a text, the longer they will give it to prove itself. The consumption context plays a huge part in audience engagement with a text. Try it yourself. Survey your friends and family to see how many minutes it takes them to decide on the worth of a narrative viewed under different circumstances.

While creators may construct a narrative with a preferred reading in mind, once the text is distributed, the audience decides what it really means, even if it was constructed as a **closed text**. Each of your classmates may read the texts you are studying in a slightly different, but equally valid, way. This is particularly the case for photographic sequences, which are often created as **open texts** where it is the role of the audience to create meaning.

Audiences judge media texts by a range of ever-shifting values and the circumstances in which the texts are consumed. What is fabulous as relaxation after a hard day at work may be drivel when analysed in terms of its production values. Think about the changing criteria you bring to your engagement with a narrative. Are you going to see it with friends, or is it forced on you in a classroom? Do you know the director, or are you choosing this text because you think the lead actor is cool? Are you a fan of the genre, or is there nothing better on the box? How much do the ideologies in which you believe influence your consumption and reading of media narratives?

If a million people see my movie, I hope they see a million different movies.

Quentin Tarantino

Activity 9.41 The never-ending story of our relationships with text

Compile an online class dossier of information on the texts you are studying:

- Read and collect the reviews, search the internet, and find advertising, articles and commentary.
- Interview people who have consumed the texts about when and where, and what they think.

From this research you should be able to determine the market for each text, how audiences received the text, and the effect of expectation on an audience's response. You will also understand more about the ideological contexts in which these texts were consumed.

Sense and Sensibility or Dumb and Dumber?

When deciding which film or TV program to watch, Media students often encounter the somewhat sensitive matter of ... ahem ... intellectual snobbery. Okay, you can admit it. You are a Media student, you know more about the media than most people and therefore are less influenced by crass advertising and the opinions of your friends, right? Wrong!

The belief that some texts are more worthy of our time and energy has bedevilled academics and students since before the printing press was invented.

Judgements about the superiority of films and TV programs are often more about personal values and taste than about their quality. This debate can be ideological, not analytical. Certainly there would be few film buffs who would consider *I Now Pronounce You Chuck and Larry* (2007), *He's Just Not That Into You* (2009) or any of *The Fast and the Furious* (2001–09) films good, but what exactly is a 'good' film?

Many Christians considered *The Passion of the Christ* (2004) a very good film. Others have decried it as excessively violent. Parents might shudder at *Scary Movie* (2000–11), but when seen in the context of the genre it is satirising, this film might be read as a damning indictment of US culture and values.

Critics rave about Sergei Eisenstein's 1925 classic *Battleship Potemkin*, but inflicted on unprepared audiences as an example of excellence in Soviet montage, this film may do enormous damage to the enthusiasm of Media students. The works of director David Lynch are highly regarded, but would Mum and Dad from the 'burbs think them brilliant or indulgent?

It is not true to argue that every text has redeeming features – some are just plain bad – but perhaps a more valuable way to discuss the matter of high culture versus popular culture is not to judge narratives on a scale of good and bad, but to look at a text in terms of their target audience and reception context, place within the history of media, the ideological contexts of its production and consumption, and production values, as well as aesthetic and conceptual content. After all, even *Santa Claus Conquers the Martians* (1964) has its place.





Alamy Stock Photo/Entertainment Pictures

Figure 9.47 Critics were divided about Zack Snyder's 2016 film *Batman v Superman*.

Throughout VCE Media, you will have discussed the different ways an audience responds to the ideas in a text. Audiences may choose to accept the images and ideas provided for them (the preferred reading), to go along with what the majority of the community think (the **dominant reading**), to compromise and modify them (a negotiated reading), or to reject them entirely (an oppositional or resistant reading).

Think of the texts that have been controversial over the past few years, such as Quentin Tarantino's *Inglourious Basterds* (2009) or *Sausage Party* (2016), directed by Conrad Vernon and Greg Tiernan; the controversy usually comes down to arguments about the value of a text:

- in absolute terms – that is, everyone or no-one should see the text
- for the intended audience – the claim is that it is unsuitable for this audience
- for audiences other than those intended for the text – so-called **susceptible audiences**.

Discussions about the value of texts are often couched in terms of their suitability for others rather than personal taste and ideology. Somehow judgements seem safer this way. Why is this the case?

The difficulties in determining veracity in 'based on a true story' films

We often use films and television to tell us about the good, or not so good, old days. It seems so easy to imagine that *Leave It to Beaver* or Stanley Kramer's 1967 classic *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* represent life in the middle of the 20th century. But they don't. Narratives represent a version of reality, not reality itself. Even those based on a true story.

How can we determine what is true and what is fictional? Sometimes we want to believe that life was like that. It wasn't. To rely on the media to tell us about history is like relying on *The Bachelorette* to learn about dating. Information is Beautiful has created some interesting visual representations of the truth of some of our favourite 'based on a true story' films. These visual representations indicate that we should be very careful about reading representations in narratives as reality.



Weblink

How can we tell whether or not the text we are consuming is an accurate representation of the time in which it was produced or set? If a text is created at one time but set in an earlier period, it is more likely that it represents the values and ideologies of the time it was produced rather than when it was set. The beautiful and iconic film *To Kill a Mockingbird*, based on Harper Lee's 1960 novel, was made in 1962 but set in the Depression era in the American South. While there were undoubtedly good men living in the South during the Depression, the film is a commentary on the ideologies around race relations in America during the 1960s. Audiences should always balance the need to believe with their knowledge of how representations are created through selection, omission and construction. Media producers want us to engage with the story; truthfulness can be secondary to sales.

TELEVISION NARRATIVES

What is the difference between film and television narratives? Both originated from the codes and conventions of theatre, but the cost and time involved in the production process saw theatrical traditions of staging persevere longer in TV narratives, including a greater reliance on actors and acting than on setting and special effects. While this is no longer the case, especially in a television world where streaming series is increasingly the norm, audiences still tend to view television narratives, particularly those made for small free-to-air audiences such as in Australia, as more simplistic in structure, with less realism than films.

On the surface, the pressure of creating more content with a smaller budget appears to affect TV narratives more than film, and their production values have traditionally been lower. This apparent difference is illusory; the business of production, distribution and exhibition commands an enormous influence over both media, and in recent years increasingly international audiences have seen greater investment in TV narrative production. Texts including *Westworld*, *Sherlock* and a plethora of police procedural narratives have dramatically lifted the production values bar in recent years. It is not that films have higher production values, but that commercial TV narratives are demonstrating a greater range of production values than ever before.

Television has brought back murder into the home – where it belongs.

Alfred Hitchcock

Television reception context and engagement

One area where TV narratives differ from film is in the reception context – audiences are constantly reminded of the business nature of the medium through the advertising it carries. In addition, TV viewing, unlike a trip to the cinema, involves constant choice. At the cinema, two choices are made: which film to see and whether or not to stay. When watching TV, channel surfing allows texts to be contrasted and compared, and a text must continue to engage an audience throughout its duration or another will be chosen. Thus the production values of different TV narratives are more easily compared than those of films. A simple click of the remote and the audience chooses the text it prefers. This choice is linked to ratings – the more successful a program is, the more a TV network can charge for advertising. As a network earns more revenue, it can spend more on programming by either producing or buying texts with higher production values. Audiences usually prefer texts with higher production values as well as those that represent the ideologies that they believe in; the cycle repeats itself. The relationship between money, production values, ideology and text is no less important in film; it is simply less obvious.

Recent technological developments have dramatically altered the relationship between television narratives and their audiences. The first is **time shifting**. Digital video recorders, streaming and catch-up sites mean that audiences are no longer required to comply with programming schedules and can consume media at a time and in a place of their choosing. This has altered audience engagement with texts.

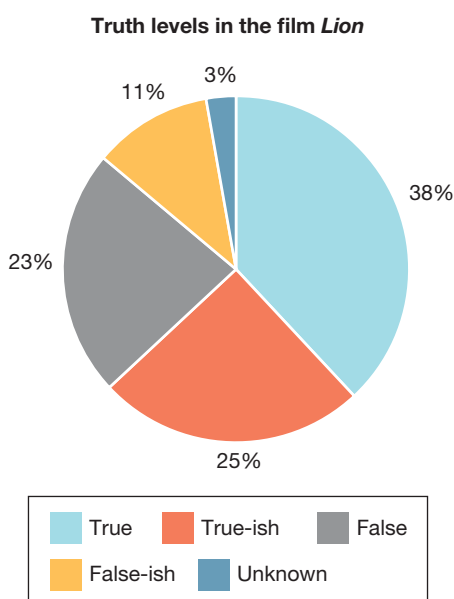


Figure 9.48 Research on the film *Lion* revealed the 'truths' presented in the film. Data: A True True Story? InformationIsBeautiful.net

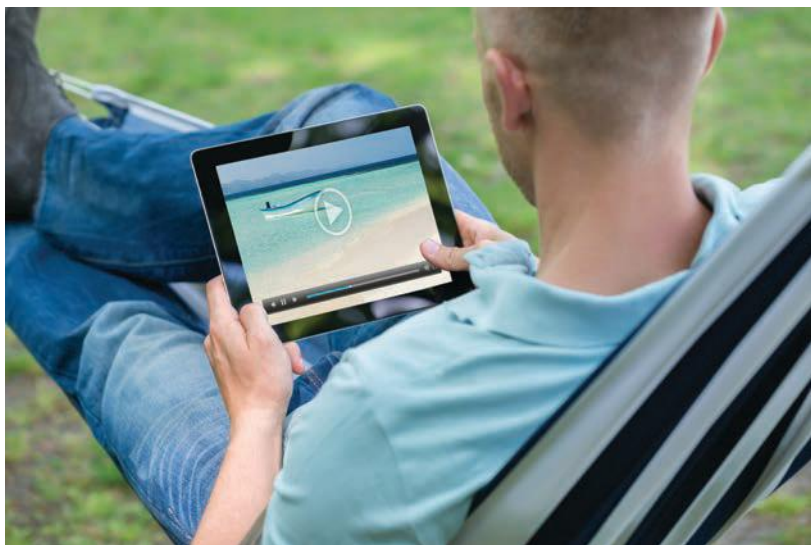


Figure 9.49 Television can now be consumed anywhere.

With less and less television being watched live, consumers are enjoying the freedom to record at home or in the cloud, watch locally or on the go, and binge watch entire series that they never had the time to enjoy.

Jay Samit, digital media innovator

Streamed television, and especially the ‘Netflix effect’, has changed not only the business model of television production and distribution, it has also been responsible for a shift in viewing patterns and, most importantly, the structure of television storytelling, which has become more complex and elaborate. Audiences are engaging with new and revamped codes and conventions in storytelling over the formulaic structures of the past half-century. Netflix and HBO have funded series with high production values, directed by big-name directors and starring well-respected quality actors.

The two things that got everyone’s attention about the ‘House of Cards’ deal was the two-season commitment and David Fincher. After David Fincher directs a series for Netflix, no one else can say, ‘Well, I’m not going to direct a series for the Internet.’

Ted Sarandos, chief content officer, Netflix

Binge watching, consuming several episodes or an entire series in one sitting is now a thing. Streaming television, catch-up programming and series’ release on DVD encourage binge watching through the construction of story and character arcs, cliffhangers and marketing designed to influence audiences to keep watching. The term ‘spoiler alert’, which once only referred to film, is now common in staff rooms and schoolyards.

Clearly the success of the Netflix model, releasing the entire season of ‘House of Cards’ at once, proved one thing: The audience wants the control. They want the freedom. If they want to binge as they’ve been doing on ‘House of Cards’ and lots of other shows, we should let them binge.

Kevin Spacey, actor



Figure 9.50 *The Handmaid’s Tale*, the most talked about TV narrative of 2017

Television narratives are subject to what has been termed the ‘water-cooler moment’ – audiences watch programs knowing that they will be the topic of discussion among friends and colleagues the next day. This impacts on the way in which a text is consumed; viewers watch in the knowledge that they will participate in the post-broadcast critique. The imperative of the water-cooler moment works in the opposite way to time shifting: in order to participate in the discussion, individual audience members must submit to the screening schedule determined by a network or streaming service. This form of reception context has a subtle but significant effect on the ways a text might be read. Think about how such discussions impact on your viewing experiences.

Television narrative formats

One important difference between film and television narratives is the greater variety of formats available to producers. These formats impact on the way an audience reads a text, because audiences read television in terms of format. Some formats demand commitment from an audience, who dare not miss even part of an episode for fear of losing the thread of the narrative; others can be approached more casually.

Series or serial?

A **series** is a television narrative that runs over a number of weeks or seasons in which characters are ongoing and each episode revolves around a different storyline. A **serial** is a television narrative in which both characters and storylines are ongoing. Serial television narratives are a dynamic system of actions and reactions that changes over the course of the series. Today, there is a great deal of flexibility between the two forms, which were once more rigidly conceptualised.

Miniseries combine features of both film and made-for-TV narrative styles, such as high production values and the ability to develop themes and characters in depth. These series are expensive to produce or buy, so TV stations broadcast them in prime time, promoting them heavily. Over time, the number of miniseries produced and broadcast has declined due to a lack of ratings and the desire of TV networks to encourage greater audience loyalty than the format fosters. Today the miniseries format is most often used for very well-known stories, such as Foxtel's remake of *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (2017). Miniseries often feature on ABC and SBS.

Television narratives are often aimed at a particular demographic and reflect or comment on the ideological contexts in which they are created. Story and character arcs are crafted to reflect the values and aspirations of the selected demographic in an attempt to secure a loyal audience. Drama/soap/comedy narratives such as *800 Words* and *House Husbands* are popular with an older mass audience. Channel Ten has sought a younger demographic with series such as *The Wrong Girl*.

During the 1990s and early 2000s, surreal, supernatural and other-worldly themes were popular in TV narrative. *The X-Files*, *Twin Peaks* and *Buffy* all had loyal followings. There has been an increase in popularity for such themes in recent years with *The Walking Dead* and *Cleverman*.

Crime remains popular with audiences, and recently true crime, both in the form of dramatised stories such as *Blue Murder: Killer Cop* and in documentaries such as *Making a Murderer*, has seen a resurgence.

TV narratives reflect the values and ideologies of the time and place of their production. The popularity in recent years of dramas such as *24*, political dramas such as *House of Cards* and forensic crime investigation narratives such as *CSI* is a reflection of audience uncertainty in changing political times.

When audiences feel unsafe, TV programming often responds with themes that offer solutions to the issues of society and reassurance in the underlying ideology of the society in which they are created and/or distributed.

While most US narratives screened on Australian commercial TV tend to be long-running seasonal texts, the ABC and SBS have screened Australian, British and European narratives that have greater variation in subject matter and format. One form is the finite serial, a variation of the miniseries, in which a narrative develops and is resolved over a limited number of episodes. The ABC series *Barracuda* (2016) and the SBS series *Safe Harbour* (2017) are finite serials.



Essential Media, photo by Tony Mott

Figure 9.51 The four-part miniseries *The Principal* (2015) screened on SBS.



Figure 9.52 *Barracuda* (2017) was a four-part series.

Televsual story structures

The structure of TV narratives is an important element in understanding how such narratives work. As most characters continue from one episode to the next, character development is significantly different from that of film. In addition, TV story formats affect the ways in which an audience views and understands the narrative. In some narratives, each story is distinct and complete within itself; this is especially the case in narratives where characters' story arcs are built over a series but the plot of each episode is discrete, such as *Please Like Me*, *Offspring* and the *CSI* franchise.

In many TV narratives, a number of character and story arcs operate over different spans of time – within a single

episode and/or across multiple episodes and seasons. The episodic series structure sees, for each episode, the resolution of some narrative possibilities, the development of others and the introduction of new plots and characters.

Some narratives combine one overarching storyline that drives the text, with a number of subplots introduced and resolved over one or more episodes. Termed the 'hybrid series', this format employs elements of series, serials and other media text types, such as fictional and non-fictional film, news and tabloid journalism.

In addition to the 30-, 60- or 90-minute time frame common to the TV narrative form, commercial TV texts are also structured around breaks for ads. The pattern of breaks in the narrative is structured rhythmically to engage and retain an audience. The significance of the ad break cannot be ignored when analysing the structure and impact of TV narratives.

TV narratives in Australia are subject to the Commercial TV Industry Code of Practice – programs are classified by station classifiers who work under similar guidelines to those employed by the Classification Board but modified for television. Classification affects the production and purchasing of programs, because networks must be mindful of the suitability of subject matter for the time slots commonly used for TV narratives' peak viewing hours. The sheer volume of streamed content has necessitated changes in this system; services are now self-classifying. The Stan spinoff series *Wolf Creek* (2016) is classified as MA. The original 2005 film on which it is based is classified R and could not be screened on television.

Production and story in TV narratives

The differences between film and TV narrative formats impact on the ways in which codes and conventions related to production and story are constructed to engage an audience.

Character development

In TV narratives, characters are subject to constant establishment and development. Mindful of creating and maintaining the largest audience possible, producers must structure texts so that those who come to the text partway through a series are able to understand character types and motivations. A production technique that is often used is dialogue that refers to names, identities and relationships in order to orient new viewers. Regular viewers are rewarded for their loyalty through the inclusion of subtle changes to character motivation and action that only those who are familiar with the text will recognise and enjoy.

Over long-running series, character development may be considerable, but between episodes it is the more subtle building of character that engages viewers. Media academic Roberta Pearson prefers the term character 'accumulation and depth' rather than development. Audiences slowly accumulate knowledge of a character and in doing so come to know them in greater depth.

The long-running American television drama can create highly elaborated characters of greater accumulation and depth than any contemporary medium.

Professor Roberta Pearson, University of Nottingham

Audiences are positioned to align themselves with particular characters in a narrative, developing allegiance to their motivation over time through their experience of a character's inner world of thoughts, emotions and morality. They become invested in a character in the light of the knowledge they have built about the character's personal life, relationships and experiences, judging these against developments in the plot of a new episode and making predictions about how they will react based on their memories and their knowledge of the memories of characters.

Occasionally, audiences have the opportunity to watch the pilot episode of a new series. These are often disappointing because pilot episodes must introduce location, characters, plot, themes, mood and style within the space of one episode. If you can, try to get hold of the pilot episode of the texts you are studying and compare them with later episodes to see how the series has developed. The Buffy who first arrives in Sunnydale in episode one is a very different woman from the one who closes the hell mouth in the last episode of season seven.

Because character development is subtle in long-running series, character arcs must concentrate on storylines for development or on opportunities for learning in which, over time, the character becomes a changed person. Conversely, the sitcom format is structured around characters who are provided with an opportunity to learn a life lesson in every episode. Often it is the same life lesson over and over. In drama, however, to maintain audience engagement there must be a discernible shift in character development and motivation as a result of the lessons learnt.

Another form of character development is the sudden threat, reveal or transformation. This technique is common to all genres and is often used at the end of a season in order to maintain audience engagement as they speculate about what will happen. It can also be used mid-season to disrupt audience expectation of the narrative progression or to eliminate a character. *Neighbours*, *Home and Away*, *Game of Thrones*, *Doctor Who* and *Breaking Bad* all use this technique to effect.

A great thing is happening on cable TV. You see characters change in stories over years, like in Tolstoy. That's a whole, thrilling new form that I really enjoy. They are Tolstoy-an in their endless character development and narrative changes ... a show like 'Breaking Bad' is astonishing.

Mike Nichols, film director

Allied to character development is the establishment and maintenance of audience engagement through character contrast, good versus bad or, more engagingly, hero and antihero. Contrast enables audiences to make moral judgements about character motivation and relationships based on their values and ideological beliefs. In the case of the antihero, relative morality comes into play, which more closely aligns with real life, where decisions are rarely black and white. This sets up the situation where audiences are constantly speculating about what a character will do and measuring actions against their own moral compass. It can be especially engaging when audiences are forced to choose between the lesser of two evils.

In most television narratives, character and story appear equally important to narrative progression; however, audiences enjoy these narratives for their characters more than for what happens to them. There is real audience pleasure in familiarity with characters, in knowing what they will do and how they are likely to react to different circumstances. *House of Cards* and *Better Call Saul* are examples of character-driven narratives, where the audience understands that characters live fuller lives than those on screen.

TV narratives tend to develop groups of characters rather than concentrate on individuals. This allows for a greater range of narrative possibilities and for the opportunity to compare individual reactions to a common event. Familiarity with the personality traits and motivations of individual characters allows the audience to predict how one character will react to new circumstances; but when an event is presented to a group of characters, outcomes are less predictable.

As a real person, he wouldn't last a minute, would he? But drama is about imperfection.

Hugh Laurie on his character in *House*

Activity 9.42 Characters in TV narratives

- 1 Watch several episodes of the texts you are studying, including the particular episodes on which you are focusing your study. Try to assume the role of a new viewer so that you can see the texts afresh.
 - a How are characters established in each episode? What do you see and hear?
 - b What is the role of the title sequence and/or episode recap in conveying information about particular characters?
 - c How does the audience learn of each character's role within the narrative, for the series as a whole and for each episode?
 - d What does the text assume about audience knowledge of characters in the episodes you are studying?
 - e Are these texts character-driven or plot-driven?
- 2 Write a report on how characters are constructed to engage the audience under the following headings:
 - Story codes and conventions
 - Production codes and conventions
 - The narrative equation
 - Audience
 - Ideology.

Story in TV narratives

Methods of constructing story in TV narratives depend on format, genre and whether a narrative is designed to be broadcast on a commercial or non-commercial station. Commercial narratives must be constructed around ad breaks and cannot, therefore, fully utilise the codes and conventions of film narrative. Each segment must be satisfying to an audience whose fingers hover over the remote control and for whom the ad break allows time to reflect on the question: Is this narrative worth continuing? Audiences are well versed in the ritual nature of TV narrative development – a factor that can work for or against continued engagement with a text.

'Story arc' is the term used to describe the introduction, development and resolution of a storyline that spans time throughout a text – several episodes, a season or even several seasons. An arc develops the idea of continuity in a text and allows for greater plot development than would otherwise be possible. Audiences allow themselves to think of a narrative occurring over a long period of time as realistic, because in this respect it mimics life. One comforting aspect of this structure is the knowledge that, no matter what trouble a character is in at the conclusion of one episode, they will survive. Audiences tune in next week to see how a cliffhanger is resolved and what characters will learn from their predicament.

Story arcs, while rhythmic, are not necessarily regular. They are structured to allow a degree of audience anticipation and prediction without becoming clichéd and dull.

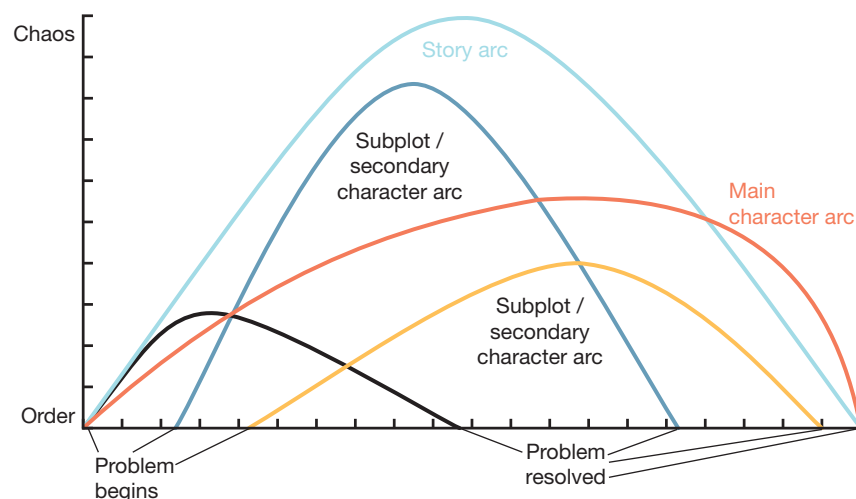


Figure 9.53 Story and character arcs describe the introduction, development and resolution of an individual storyline or character that spans time – several episodes, a season or even several seasons.

Activity 9.43 Plotting story and character arcs

For each text you are studying, plot the story and character arcs over several episodes, including those either side of the episodes on which you are focusing. Pay particular attention to your focus episodes.

- 1 What story and character arcs are introduced and resolved in the episodes you are studying?
- 2 What story and character arcs are ongoing and remained unresolved?
- 3 How do story and character arcs contribute to audience understanding of and pleasure in your texts?
- 4 What does the development and resolution of each story and character arc reveal about values and ideology?

Production codes and conventions particular to television narratives

While television narratives share the same production elements as film texts, the way in which these elements are used to construct the narrative differs due to the particular commercial and technical aspects of TV production, broadcast or streaming format and the inability of producers to control the viewing context.

Camera and mise en scène may be constructed differently due to the expectation that the narrative will be viewed on a range of screen sizes; there is simply not the screen 'real estate' in which to place significant characters and objects if the narrative is to be successful on a small screen. Hence, television narratives tend to use more mid shots and close-ups, which also lend themselves to the development of and audience engagement with character.

Lighting is more often low-key in television narratives because producers know that, unlike a darkened cinema, they cannot control the viewing context. Editing techniques are also different in that there are fewer special effects transitions and greater use of title cards to structure the progression of time. Colour grading may aim for a naturalistic effect to emphasise the apparent realism of long-running narratives. Editing may be structured around ad breaks.

Sound can be constructed very differently in televisual narratives, which are generally not viewed with cinema surround sound. This means that the perception of depth and the complexity of sound design available in film texts are less apparent.

Activity 9.44 Investigating how the medium impacts on narrative

The most common differences between film and television narratives are associated with production values and industry practices. When evaluating made-for-TV narratives, it is important to note how these factors affect the construction of story and production elements, and the impact of this on audience reception.

- 1 Use the narrative equation to analyse your texts for codes and conventions related to story, production and audience. Make additional notes on how the medium and broadcast considerations affect the construction of each element and how an audience might read the narrative.
- 2 Write a report that details the impact of the medium of television on your texts.

NON-FICTION NARRATIVES

I did documentary film for a long time, and I spent a lot of time behind the camera, fervently wishing that the reality I was filming would conform to my narrative propriety. But you can't control it.

Ruth Ozeki, author and filmmaker

All drama is conflict. Without conflict, there is no action. Without action, there is no character. Without character, there is no story. And without story, there is no screenplay.

Syd Field, screenwriting guru

I came from the school of cinéma-vérité documentaries, which was: Do not manipulate reality as it was happening but create a narrative in the editing room.

Mira Nair, filmmaker

Documentaries have always inspired me in narrative filmmaking.

Griffin Dunne, actor and director

Students studying non-fiction narratives need a good grasp of the codes and construction of fictional narratives as a starting point for understanding audiovisual storytelling because there is so much overlap in both narrative forms. What is the difference between fictional and non-fiction narratives? In theory, we tend to think that fictional narratives inhabit the world of make-believe and that the factual nature of non-fiction should make it easier to determine the ideological beliefs that inform them, but this is not always the case.

As you learnt in your study of representation, documentary narratives can take many forms, some strictly informational and others based in story, but all are situated in a social, cultural, ideological world that informs not only their content but also their structure. Now would be a good time to revise the codes and conventions of documentary structures outlined in Chapter 3.

Documentary television, radio and film have undergone a revival in recent years. The development of lightweight digital equipment has made the production process easier and within reach of more producers. This has facilitated increased informality in technique and the development of more subjectivity through the personal relationships between producers and their subjects. Documentary purists see this moving away from a focus on facts and objectivity as a degradation of the form, but others embrace subjectivity and seek an emotional response from audiences. No matter what the form, documentaries from both camps invariably represent the ideologies on which they are based.

Ethnographic filmmaker Toni de Bromhead claims that documentary reaches for ‘hearts and souls not just minds’ and that central to documentary storytelling is ‘emotional response and empathy’. De Bromhead emphasises the cinematic qualities of documentary, which is experiential, emotive, expressive and celebrates subjectivity. Rather than an objective treatment, cinematic documentary uses creative cinematic codes and conventions, values the expression of opinion, foregrounds the point of view of the filmmaker, and creative treatment is expected. The work of Michael Moore is testament to this approach.

De Bromhead believes that documentary’s ‘claim to the real’ is subjective rather than objective; it is always mediated by the subjectivity of the filmmaker who employs image, sound, action and structure to produce meaning. For de Bromhead, the real aim of documentary storytelling is filmic pleasure.

Factuality

Brian McNair, Professor of Journalism, Media and Communication at Queensland University of Technology, has coined the term ‘factuality’ to describe a genre of ‘fact-based content which has much in common with investigative and other forms of journalism, but strongly features elements of narrative drama, soap opera, and other fictional formats such as cliffhanging endings, unexpected plot twists and jaw-dropping moments of revelation’.

Factuality is evident in film and television narrative documentary texts. While they are constructed in a variety of forms, many can be described as docudramas. Prominent texts in this genre include *Making a Murderer* (2015–), directed by Laura Ricciardi and Moira Demos, *Going Clear* (2015), directed by Alex Gibney, and podcast series *Serial* (2014–). There are moments of ‘factuality’ in propaganda, reality media and in social impact campaigns that combine documentary with movements designed to challenge dominant ideologies and change behaviour. *That Sugar Film* (2014), *Gayby Baby* (2015), *Embrace* (2016) and *Chasing Asylum* (2016) are all films associated with social movements. The ideologies on which they are based and those that they seek to challenge are evident throughout the construction of each of these narratives.

Activity 9.45 Non-fiction narratives: engaging but truthful?

Select a popular non-fiction narrative and examine the interests of stakeholders, such as the subjects of the text, producers, distributors and audiences, in making meaning.

- 1 How has the narrative been constructed to promote a particular point of view?
- 2 What is the underlying ideology on which this point of view is based?
- 3 What possible readings could be made by different audiences?
- 4 How can audiences determine what is truth and what is opinion or fiction in the narrative?
- 5 Analyse the ethics of non-fiction media production.

AUDIO NARRATIVES

Congratulations to those studying radio or audio narratives. Once the dominant medium, since television radio had, until recently, become a niche media form until the advent of podcasting. See Chapter 8 for more on podcasting.

Radio narratives have a long history. Everyone knows about Orson Welles's *The War of the Worlds* (1938), *The Goons*, BBC (1951–60) and Douglas Adams's *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, BBC (1978–80), but there are thousands of other examples, particularly with the rise of podcasting in recent years. Of these, *Serial* (2014–) is the most famous. Try your favourite podcasting app, the ABC or the BBC websites, or search for 'radio play' or 'podcast documentary' to experience a range of radio narratives.

Recent convergent media technologies have seen a resurgence in audio storytelling through digital recording and sequencing techniques and the proliferation of online radio stations. These developments have not only changed the way radio narratives are made but, perhaps more importantly, how they are consumed.

The power of radio narrative lies in the head of the listener. Radio narrative is a personal medium; it cannot be part of a conversation, because to chat risks missing something. While the broadcast era programs listed above originally enjoyed wide audience appeal and have since acquired a cult following, more recent radio drama is likely to be consumed alone and in silence. Traditionally, radio narratives were broadcast into living rooms and listened to by an audience consisting of groups of listeners. Today, the audience comprises thousands of lone listeners sitting at their computers or downloading podcasts and listening through headphones.

Radio has wings. It has no stage to keep it within the limits of a proscenium arch, no camera to confine to things that may be seen. The imagination of the listener is our most ardent and helpful collaborator.

Jerome Lawrence, *Off Mike*, 1944

Think about the effect that such a reception context might have on an audience. It has often been claimed that what we imagine is more powerful than what we see. If that is true, then radio has the potential to be the most powerful medium of all. Perhaps Orson Welles was onto something with *The War of the Worlds*.

Many film and TV narratives rely heavily on sound as a vital element of their narrative construction, with multilayered soundtracks creating depth and sophistication. Much of the information about narrative in this chapter is therefore applicable to a study of radio narratives. There are, however, matters specific to the medium that should be considered in the study of radio narratives.

Radio narratives have been called an actor's medium and also a playwright's medium. The nature of audio, where there is little interference from other sensory stimulation, directs the audience to concentrate on the qualities of the sound as it suggests meaning. Words, their structure, delivery and pace form the basis of radio narratives. Thus the playwright has a luxury that is denied a screenwriter of film and TV, for whom the visual qualities of their media forms often dominate. Similarly, the quality of an actor's voice, while subject to direction and production techniques, is foregrounded in radio as the primary source of meaning.

Radio narratives position an audience within the action in a way that is unique to this media form. Production techniques – including the use of special effects, stereo and surround sound – can envelop an audience, or even go so far as to include them as a character, if the playwright so chooses. Suspension of disbelief can be taken to a new level of realism in such circumstances.



Figure 9.54 *Serial*, the most famous podcast of all time



Figure 9.55 Traditionally, radio narratives were broadcast into living rooms and listened to by an audience consisting of groups of listeners.

Today, commentators refer to different forms of realism in radio narratives:

- Traditional forms of realism create a narrative that runs along the cause-and-effect model familiar to film and TV audiences. The setting may range from the domestic to the fantastic; the characters from ordinary to bizarre, but the codes and conventions of narrative structure still apply.
- New or digital realism in radio narrative is not about reality as we normally understand it, but a form of conceptual reality where sound, music, story, dialogue and silence are combined to suggest an idea or narrative that is authentically real to an audience. It engages the audience as individuals, and the form of reality it suggests will be different for each listener.

Bluebird AR (2010) takes radio storytelling even further. In this interactive multi-platform narrative game, listeners are invited to play with the narrative as it unfolds. You can enter the *Bluebird AR* site via the link.



Scaffold

Activity 9.46 Deconstructing the layers in radio narratives

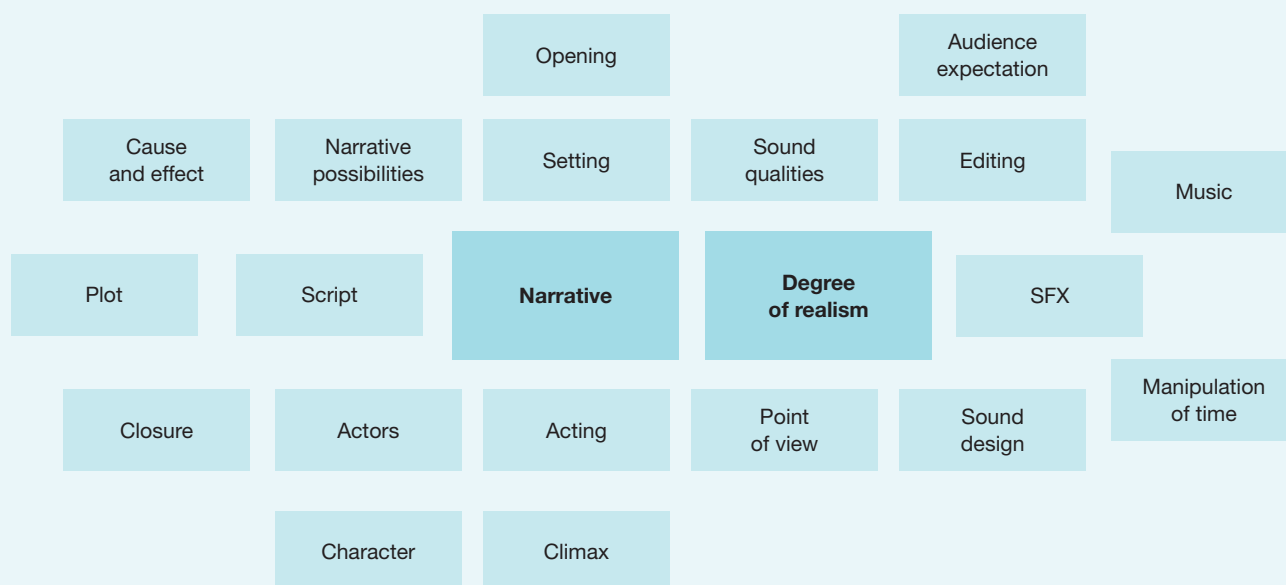
One way to understand the complexities of radio narrative construction is to use the audio planning timeline used by students creating radio productions. It is available on NelsonNet.

Choose several important scenes and identify as many layers of sound as you can. Chart these on the template to illustrate character and story progression.

Activity 9.47 Radio codes and conventions as a concept map

Create a concept map for the narratives you are studying, using all the story, production and audience codes and conventions relevant to your texts.

You may need to add or delete elements from this example (and you will certainly need to resize and rearrange them to create a map that demonstrates the interdependency of elements).



NARRATIVE PRINT AND PHOTOGRAPHY

While most students will undertake their study of narrative in film, television or radio, a number will work in the areas of print and photography. These students will find much of the material in this chapter useful when analysing the nature and function of narrative, the relationship between narrative and the ideological and institutional contexts of production, distribution, consumption and reception, story structures, character development and image composition. Students studying print and photography narratives will also consider the impact of tangible media forms on narrative construction and reading, and the codes and conventions related to typography, journalism and photographic technique.

PHOTOGRAPHIC NARRATIVES

In a modern media world, the line between photography and print is blurred. While photographic narratives without text are common, it is rare to find a print production that does not contain photographs. The material below is designed for students studying both photographic and print narratives.

In telling visual stories about the world, photography is narrating the world.

Professor David Campbell, visual storytelling academic

Photographic narratives are designed to construct a story in visual form. While a photograph captures a point in time, a narrative sequence or series connects and structures events over time. The narrative is constructed through the cumulative effect of the series. Because a photographic narrative is comprised of a series of images, it is able to order and contextualise the story in a way that is difficult for a single image.

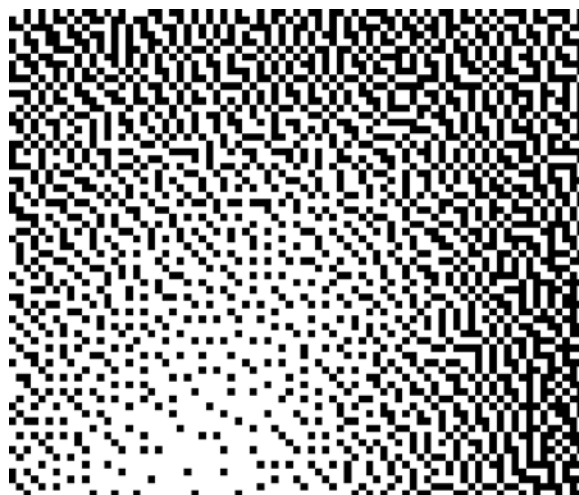
Audiences traditionally think of a photograph as a representation of reality; however, this is not always the case, and the degree of realism in photographs varies. In a photographic narrative, the story may be a documentary record of actual people or events or it may be entirely fictional or even **conceptual**. Many photographic narratives contain elements of all three.

Photographic narratives may be designed with a sense of literal realism in mind, or they may be metaphoric or suggestive of an idea. Some photographic narratives are constructed with a clear meaning evident in the work; others are more open-ended or ambiguous, relying on the audience to invent a narrative that is personal to them from elements contained within the images.

Photographic style, genre and technique, together with the application of codes and conventions related to both photography and narratives in other media forms, are used to suggest meaning in a photo series. If you are studying photographic narratives, many of the codes and conventions related to story and production outlined earlier in this chapter will be helpful for your analysis. Use the relevant aspects of the narrative equation, including art elements and design principles, to deconstruct the works you are studying and organise your understanding.

Photographic narratives, like all media products, are created, distributed, consumed and read within a range of historical, political, social, cultural, institutional and ideological contexts. Photographers, their patrons or employers, publishers and galleries all operate within these contexts. Examining the relationship between a narrative and the world in which it has come to exist will reveal much about how ideology shapes the work.

The relationship between the ideological and institutional contexts in which the works have been created and distributed is often more clearly evident in photographic and print narratives than is the



Flickr/Kevin Dooley CC BY 2.0

Figure 9.56 Kevin Dooley, *Chicago at night*, from *a distance*, 2008 (detail)



case for audiovisual narratives. This is particularly the case if a photographic narrative has been created for publication in print. The intent of the owner and publisher can be determined by factors including the editorial policy and content, distribution and readership of a newspaper or magazine. A photographic narrative published in a News Corp publication will have a very different ideological intent from one published in *The Guardian*.

The consumption context is important to reading photographic narratives. The intent of those exhibited in a gallery or other art space is shaped by the design of the exhibition and the space in which images are hung. The curation of an exhibition, including aspects such as advertising, lighting, placement, information on artwork labels and the relationship to other works, influences audience readings of these narratives. If you are studying a photographic narrative, try to view it as originally intended. It is important to consider the impact of the original exhibition space as well as the time and place of the narrative's construction and exhibition. If you are consuming photographic narratives online or in a book, ensure that you analyse the relationship between the work as originally exhibited and how the work is consumed and read today.

The photo essay is a popular form of photographic narrative that can be found in books, magazines, online, in galleries or in other art spaces. The consumption of a photo essay in a print production such as a magazine or newspaper means the work is contextualised by the articles and advertising surrounding it. Other aspects of the production, distribution and consumption of a photo essay in print, such as genre and style, the size of the publication, paper stock and the technologies used to reproduce the work, will all impact on the way it is read.

PRINT NARRATIVES

Great journalism will always attract readers. The words, pictures and graphics that are the stuff of journalism have to be brilliantly packaged; they must feed the mind and move the heart.

Rupert Murdoch

Print narratives are constructed in a range of styles and genres. Publications such as comics are designed to include one or more stories per issue. Magazines and newspapers are structured with a range of stand-alone fictional or non-fictional narrative articles, features, images, graphics and advertising that together construct a wider narrative that is aimed at a particular demographic.

Over time, the style and content of newspapers and magazines construct metanarratives through the repetition of representations and storylines. This is particularly the case in genre-based publications such as women's or lifestyle magazines. If you are studying one magazine brand, choose issues that are spread across time to see the metanarrative in action.

Most print productions feature photographs. These may be a dominant aspect of the production, as is the case of photo essays in weekend and online newspapers, or the photographs may serve as illustrations for news content or feature articles. Be sure to analyse images together with the copy they illustrate as well as in their own right.

Print productions are not designed for a long shelf life and are therefore particularly good examples of narratives that reflect the precise historical, political, social, cultural, institutional and ideological contexts of their creation, distribution and consumption. Most print productions are specialised; content is created around one area of interest, such as fashion, motorsport or food. They are designed for specific audiences, which means that it is possible to determine an accurate understanding of the relationship between readers, their interests and concerns and their print production of choice.

The codes and conventions of print narratives rely on many appropriate to other media forms, especially those related to story. The content of articles, commonly termed text or copy, contributes to the construction of narrative, as do typographical elements, accompanying images and captions, graphic elements and cartoons.

Activity 9.48 Analysing photographic and print narratives

Like all media **textual analysis**, the study of photographic and print narratives involves an examination of the narrative as a whole and of its individual parts.

Obtain a print copy of the narratives you are studying. Deconstruct and annotate each image or page to identify and analyse the codes and conventions used to suggest meaning. Why did the creator choose to construct it as they did?

How do the narrative codes and conventions used to construct each text position the audience to read the intended meaning of the text? What do these elements reveal about the ideologies underlying the narrative?

Study the text as a whole. How do you read the text? What textual, social and ideological factors affect your reading?

How would the original audience have read the text? What textual, social and ideological factors would have informed their reading?

Create an illustrated visual essay that demonstrates your learning.

NARRATIVE IS DEAD, LONG LIVE THE NARRATIVE

Recent commentators have claimed that 'narrative' is a redundant term for both film and TV. These commentators claim that big-budget feature films and TV programs no longer tell stories; they are simply blockbuster epics that take the form of one spectacular scene after another. Ironically, other commentators believe that everything in the media is narrative and that all the media ever does is to create and distribute stories. These commentators find narrative not only in film and drama, but also in documentaries, reality TV, games, ads, news, infotainment, social media, print, photography and especially in sports broadcasting. Both ideas hold that ideologies underpin narratives big and small. What do you think?

Activity 9.49 Reflecting on the experts

Throughout this chapter, quotes from narrative producers and academics have been inserted to inform and inspire your study of narrative and ideology.

Choose one or more quotes that speak to you of the narratives you are studying this year and use them as a starting point for a reflection on your learning in this area of study. Your work should be in the form of a written or visual essay and published online for your classmates to share.



OUTCOME 2

On completion of this unit the student should be able to research aspects of a media form and experiment with media technologies and media production processes to inform and document the design of a media production.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 2.

KEY KNOWLEDGE

- media codes and conventions, narrative, genres and styles appropriate to the selected media form
- structural and aesthetic qualities of media products that engage with and are read by audiences
- research that informs the exploration and development of ideas and skills in a selected media form
- methods for recording, documenting and evaluating research
- media equipment, technologies and processes appropriate to a selected media form and proposed product
- media language.

KEY SKILLS

- explore media codes and conventions, narratives, genres and styles appropriate to the selected media form
- analyse how audiences are engaged by structural and aesthetic qualities of media products
- analyse how audiences use structural and aesthetic qualities to read media products
- undertake research to inform the exploration and development of ideas and skills in a selected media form
- record, document and evaluate the exploration and development of ideas and skills in a selected media form
- develop skills in the use of equipment, media technologies and processes appropriate to a selected media form and proposed product
- evaluate the use of equipment, media technologies and processes of the proposed product through documentation
- use media language.

Area of Study Outcomes, Key Knowledge and Key Skills points are reproduced by permission from the VCE Media Study Design (2018–2022), © VCAA.

Designing a media production is all about choice – creative choices, technological choices and organisational choices. This outcome, which is the first stage of your SAT (school-assessed task), is designed to guide you through these choices. It has two areas of focus: an investigation of a media form and the development of production skills.

Investigating a media form

Over the next few weeks, you will research aspects of the media form in which you will work to design and produce your production. This will help you will develop a deep knowledge of areas relevant to your production, such as form, narrative, text, genre, style, codes and conventions. You will examine and learn from the works and practice of media creators who have worked in media forms similar to that of your proposed production. You will analyse how media texts have been constructed, examining how particular structural and aesthetic qualities relevant to your proposed production have been achieved to engage audiences and structure readings of the texts. This will inform your production design, enabling you to create a production of which you will be proud.

Developing production skills

At the same time as you investigate the media form in which you are working, you will develop skills in the use of the media equipment, applications and processes you need to develop, design and produce your production. In doing so, you will learn what the equipment available to you is capable of producing and understand the limitations within which you will work. You will also learn how to manage equipment, timelines and production processes, all of which will inform the development of your proposed production.

To demonstrate the development of your knowledge and skills, you will record your learning in the form of records of research, annotated production activities, exercises, experiments and reflection. Each of the activities in this chapter will contribute to these records.

BEGINNING THE PROCESS

All Media students enjoy the production process – for many, it is the reason they choose this subject. If you studied Units 1 and 2 Media last year, you will already have a good understanding of how media is produced; for you, this area of study is a place to consolidate your knowledge and skills and to develop new ones. If you are new to Media, this area of study will give you the grounding you need to design and create a media production.

Whether or not you have completed Units 1 and 2 Media, your engagement with the media means that you already know a great deal about how media products are designed and constructed. This area of study is designed to build on your existing knowledge and skills and to help you learn new techniques. While you undertake the activities set out in this chapter, you will also be learning how media professionals work. Try to mirror industry practice in your own work as much as possible.

Your research is assessed as part of the Media SAT, but the work you produce over the next few weeks will not be part of your production. You cannot submit the same work for assessment twice. Instead, it is designed to give you the space to develop production skills and to explore ideas and the form in which they will be constructed and communicated.

PRACTICAL TIP

You will find many production resources, including templates and advice, on NelsonNet. Use these to help you organise your learning and your production.

Choose your media form

It is important to approach this outcome, media production development, with a clear understanding of the media form in which you will work. When weighing up the options, work to your strengths. If you are not sure where your skills lie, use your school headstart program and the summer holidays to play with different media forms so that by the time you come to this area of study you know where to direct your interests and talents.

Some students will approach this area of study with a clear vision of their proposed product in mind. If you are one of these students, you may have already begun planning your production. Use this area of study to learn about media productions in the same media form, genre and style while investigating the possibilities and limitations of the equipment, applications and processes available to you. Spend time reflecting on your personal strengths so that you have the confidence you need to achieve your vision.

There are many students who know the form they want to work in but do not have any ideas about what their production will be. If you are one of these students, use this area of study to explore story

forms, genres and styles. Start thinking about your skills and whether they would lend themselves to fiction or non-fiction. The equipment and resources available to you will help you narrow the possibilities until a production begins to emerge.

Now is a good time to review Chapter 2 for an overview of the media production process. It is also a good idea to read Chapters 10, 11 and 12 now, before you begin any activities. Each outcome in the SAT builds on the previous one and it is always useful to understand the journey ahead.

I have a lot of influences. I like to sit down with the cinematographer a month before, and we'll watch pieces of 20 or 30 movies. You're basically the sum of all the experiences you've ever had, and they're sort of shaken up in you and reproduced in the things you create, and that includes seeing movies.

Ben Affleck, actor, director and screenwriter

Activity 10.1 The research folio: a physical and a digital record of learning

Think about all the possibilities for your media production.

Begin a notebook, visual diary, folio and/or blog where you can record your ideas and all of the activities you complete for this outcome. Ensure that you have lots of plastic pockets on hand to store clippings, manuals and tutorials, and so on. Divide your folio into two sections that match the twin aspects of this area of study.

1 Media form, codes, conventions and styles

- If you already know the direction in which your production is heading, your folio can be used to record your planning as it develops. If you don't have any ideas yet, brainstorm and record possibilities as they come to you. Include your brainstorms in your folio. As ideas come to you, add them to your collection and make a rough note about why you have included the item: what it is that appeals or doesn't appeal and why. Everything you do for this outcome goes into your folio. Keep everything!
- Create an investigation blog in which you collect and curate your online research. The blog will save time because you won't have to record URLs manually or make hard copies of online materials. You will be able to make efficient use of audiovisual references and instructional sites and post examples of the videos, sound recordings, images and other material that you collect as part of this outcome. Provide a link to your blog in your folio and email the URL to your teacher.
- Collect and include examples of media texts you enjoy, production techniques that engage you or that you might consider using in your work. This collection could include particular shots or stills, page layouts, video excerpts, examples of how media creators use a particular effect, genre or personal style, illustrations or examples of the use of light, colour or sound, layout or typography – the content is up to you. Inspiration can come from anywhere.
- It is a good idea to include examples of media texts and techniques that don't work for you too, such as dodgy websites or badly designed print layouts, photographic styles that jar, or characters you find annoying.
- Reflect on, research and annotate each item in your collection to illustrate your developing knowledge about how media codes and conventions, narrative structures, genre, style and aesthetic elements are constructed to suggest meaning and engage audiences.

2 Production skills

- Make notes about the equipment and materials available to you and the production techniques that you might use or need to develop skills in. Record your learning from the tutorials you undertake. Download and keep copies of instruction manuals for equipment you use. Document your experimentation and what you learn from it along the way. Include everything you do, such as trials of equipment and production experimentation, successful or not. Evaluate your learning and note how and why your skills are developing over time.
- Your folio is a working document, so don't worry about making it look pretty. It is simply a record of your thoughts, inspiration and most of all your developing knowledge and skills. The work you complete for this outcome will be assessed, but the criteria are all about content, not decoration. When you submit your folio, it should clearly reveal the development of your knowledge of how the structural and aesthetic qualities of media products engage audiences and your developing ability to use and evaluate the technologies and processes you will employ in your production.
- This outcome is about your journey and development. You should demonstrate what you have learnt from your research, successes and failures.

Your folio and blog are tools to begin a dialogue with your teacher, your classmates and anyone else who is interested – it is easier to discuss your tastes, plans and inspiration if you have examples in front of you. In the industry, this is called **referencing**. The process of talking about your ideas will help you clarify what is possible and what is not and provide an opportunity for suggestions from others.

INSPIRATION

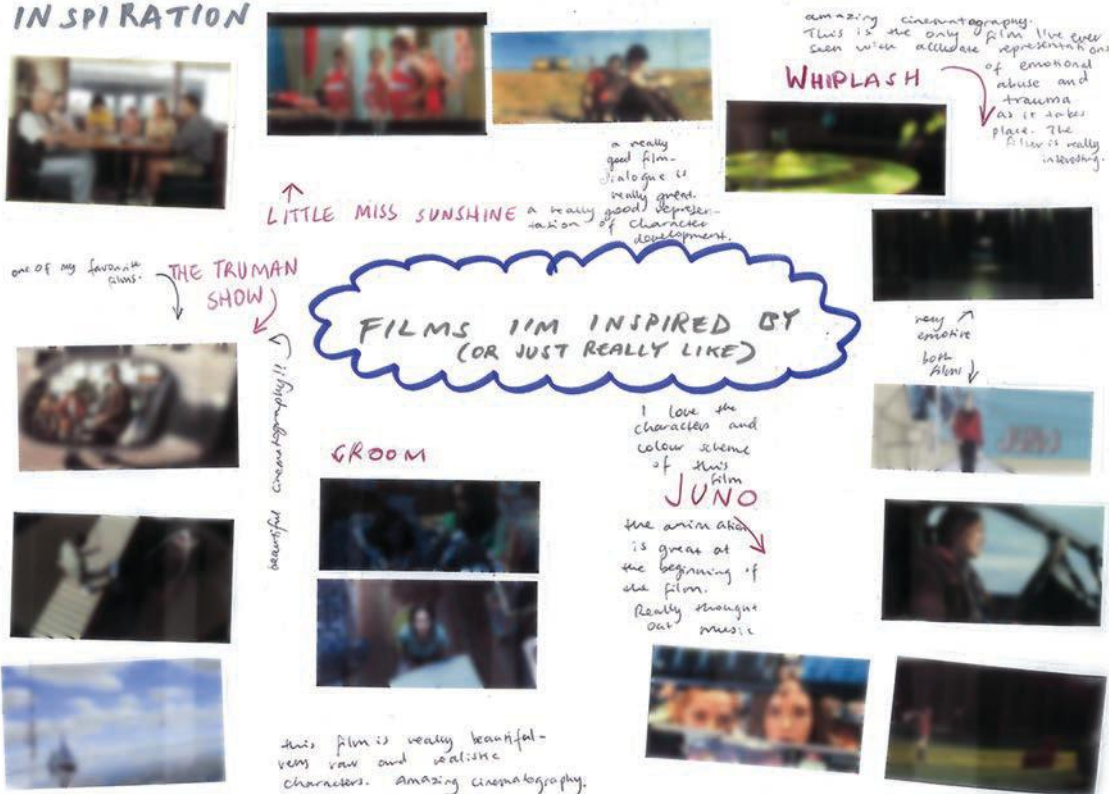


Figure 10.1 Collect examples of particular shots that appeal to you, and those that don't.

Activity 10.2 DIY media education

Every student in your class has different skills and interests, and all will be heading in a different direction. This means that you will use all of your independent learning skills to satisfy this outcome. Your teacher will guide you in activities designed to help you learn techniques and develop ideas that are relevant to your proposed production, but will not be able to provide all the information you need. In some areas of production, you may have greater skills than your teacher, as it is impossible to stay current across all media forms. Be prepared to teach your teacher, and also your classmates. This area of study is an opportunity to share your learning and to learn from others.

Create a learning log table in your folio or blog. Set personal learning goals for every lesson. These will include the activities your teacher sets, but also those you set for yourself. List your goals at the beginning of every class and at the end reflect on and record your progress. Note the location of the evidence of your learning and set some homework goals. Your learning log should look like this:

Date	Goals	Activities	What I learnt today	Record of learning page reference	Homework and follow-up
3 March	Learn about grid structures for print productions	- Investigate Thinking with Type page on grids. - Create a grid in InDesign.	The aesthetic differences between a three- and four-column grid	Page 9 and dated March 3 on blog	- Test master pages in InDesign. - What happens if I want to break a grid in InDesign?

Over the next few weeks, you will find the list of knowledge and skills you acquire is very impressive. Share your learning and the websites and resources you found valuable on a class Google doc. How far you take these skills will depend on your drive and commitment. Good luck.

Media equipment

All Media students, teachers and professionals love their equipment and every one of them thinks they don't have enough of it. The truth is, nobody working in the media ever thinks they have enough gear. However, success in VCE Media is not about how much equipment you have. If your school offers

Media, then you will have enough equipment to achieve at the highest level. It is not the gear you have, but what you do with it that is important. This outcome is all about discovering what the equipment will do and pushing it to the max.

Make the equipment an extension of yourself

Over the next few weeks, plan to learn everything you can about the equipment you will use at each stage of the production process: play with it, learn from it, live it. Aim to make the equipment an extension of yourself; every button and switch and knob should be under your control. Borrow equipment from school, use it at lunchtime, take it home overnight and for the weekend. Download and read the instruction manuals and keep them on your phone for quick reference. Search for and watch online tutorials about the equipment you will use.

Activity 10.3 Equipment audit

For each of the media forms in which you might work this year, conduct an audit of the equipment available to you and your class. Make a table like the one below, listing all the equipment, its availability and how many students will be using it. This will help you in your planning.

Add an extra column to record each time you use the equipment. This will be a visual reminder to keep practising.

Item	Number available	Number of students sharing	Equipment availability	Manual downloaded and read	Tutorial completed	My practice
Panasonic HD video camera	3	9	Class time, overnight, weekends	3 March	17 March	✓
Dolly, jib and rig	1	9	Class time, lunchtime, after school	20 April	1 May	✓✓
Rode video microphone	2	9	Class time, lunchtime, overnight, weekends	15 March	28 April	✓✓✓
Canon DSLR Kit lens	5	19	Class time, lunchtime, overnight, weekends	5 March	11 April	✓✓✓✓✓
50 mm lens	1	19	Class time, lunchtime, overnight, weekends	9 March	16 March	✓✓✓
Epson printer	1	10	Class time, lunchtime, after school	Not required	Not required	Not required

I'll just google that

There are thousands of really great online resources to learn about everything to do with your production and just as many dodgy ones. How do you know which ones are any good? The trick is to spend a few hours searching for reputable information and curating your own playlist of 'go to' sites. Keep a record of these in your blog and create a class Google doc or wiki where everyone shares links to the sites they have found useful. Check out the following to get you started.

- Print production
 - I Love Typography
 - Thinking With Type
- Photography
 - Digital Photography School
 - Australian Photography
- Video production
 - RocketJump Film School
 - DSLR Guide
- Audio production
 - Mike Russell
 - Podcast Fast

Lynda is a high-quality subscription tutorial site with thousands of video tutorials on every piece of software you could possibly use. See page 22 for how to access this remarkable site for free.

A great way to find really useful resources is to use Pinterest, an application on which users 'pin' sites they think are worth saving. Pinterest describes itself as a 'catalogue of ideas'. Users will have done some of the curation for you. Search using terms appropriate to your needs. For example, the terms 'magazine production layout design' will reveal hundreds of pinned links that you can browse.



Weblink

Media software and apps

Production and post-production software and apps are a vital part of the production process. Think of them as the glue between the equipment and the production. Developing a deep knowledge of software allows students to construct complex ideas and ensures that the production process runs as smoothly as possible. The internet is awash with online tutorials about how to use the software available to you. Product websites and Lynda are the best places to start.

Activity 10.4 Software audit

For each stage of the production process, list the software and apps you will use in the planning and completion of your production. Keep a record of your developing skills in the use of this software.

For example:

Software	Availability	Tutorial completed	Skill learnt	Location of resources and online tutorials (include URLs)	Examples of my work learning, testing and using this software
Adobe Premiere Pro CC	Class time, lunchtime, after school	1 May	Creating project, managing project settings, titles	Adobe website Lynda Adobe Premiere Visual Guide (library) YouTube tutorials	www.myblog.com/ titles sequence pen tool mark in and mark out

Activity 10.5 Demonstrating your developing skills

Each media form has its own specialty equipment and software. This outcome requires you to document, evaluate and reflect on the production activities, exercises and experiments you undertake, both as a record of your developing skills and to inform your production design. This activity takes the work you are completing for Activity 10.1 to the next level and should be completed as part of your investigation folio. It is suggested that, in addition to the short activities completed in class, students complete several fully documented activities, exercises and experiments.

For each media form outlined in this chapter, there are a number of suggested activities designed to assist in developing confidence, knowledge and skills in the use of equipment and software. Use the questions and statements below to help you demonstrate your achievement of these goals.

- What was my aim?
- What did I do and how long did it take?
- What did I find easy and what was hard? Why?
- At the beginning of the task, I rated my skills at:
Newbie ----- I get by ----- mad skills
- I now rate my skills at:
Newbie ----- I get by ----- mad skills
- The best things I learnt in doing this task were:
- Next time I use this equipment/software I will avoid:
- This activity will inform my proposed production by:

STORY STRUCTURES, NARRATIVE, GENRE, STYLE, CODES AND CONVENTIONS

By this point in VCE Media, you will be well aware of the importance of narrative, story structures, genre and style in the construction of media products. You will have also developed a deep knowledge of how technical and symbolic codes and conventions suggest meaning and engage audiences. Now is the time to examine how they are used in the works of media professionals and in texts that can inform your production. Record all of your research in your investigation folio or blog.

Whether fictional or non-fictional, all media products constitute narratives: the selection and ordering of events in space and time. The construction of narratives is one of the primary ways humans convey meaning. In most media products, it is the creator who structures the narrative through their manipulation of codes and conventions appropriate to the media form, such as script, camera, editing and sound in film or the layout of a page or photographs in print, photographic exhibitions or web pages.

Audiences participate in the construction of narratives through their reading of the material presented to them. They may accept the dominant or preferred reading of the narrative, reject it or, more commonly, negotiate a reading by accepting some aspects and rejecting others. Occasionally, media productions are designed to allow each audience member to construct an individual narrative from the information they see, hear and/or read. These productions are often constructed in experimental forms or use codes and conventions in ambiguous ways.

Reference the experts

Filmmakers learn from watching films, designers follow design and photographers know photography. Think about productions in the media form in which you are planning to work that you have enjoyed. Find examples and add them to your folio. Post links to these works, capture stills or photograph pages that you think are effective. Make notes about how aspects of these productions engaged you. What techniques would you consider using in your production?

HAYLEY MIRO, FILM EDITOR AND PHOTOGRAPHER

Photography as an art form is a relatively new concept considering how long painters have been painting, for instance. Photography has the added element of total realism upon capture – a document of light which adds to its density as an extraordinarily interesting form of interpretation. This is what makes it unique. An immediate manipulation, even the untouched photo.

Other than Francesca Woodman, Bill Henson and Stephanie Schneider, I have generally looked outside of the conventional photographic scene for inspiration. Why? Because I want to make a picture, not necessarily a photograph.

The great painters move me so deeply – Vermeer, Rembrandt, John Singer Sargent, Mary Cassatt, Turner and Van Gogh (I could keep going, there are so many). I look at their pictures constantly for energy and to remind me of beauty in its various forms, subjects and eras.

Stylistically, anything is achievable when making your final print. It's a wonderful craft.

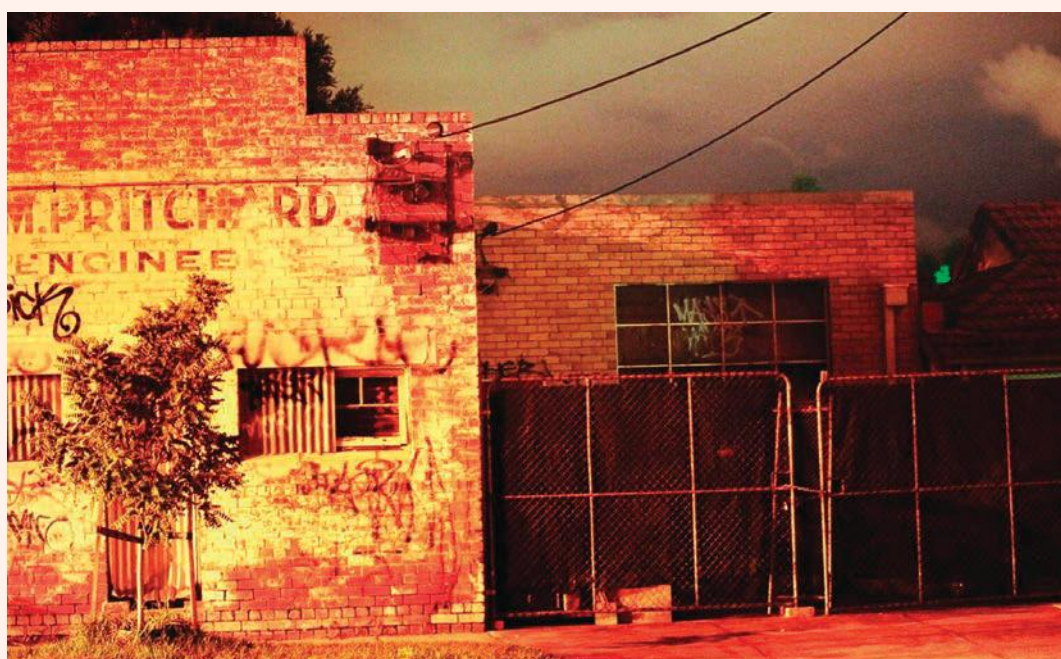


Figure 10.2 Hayley Miro's influences are alive in her work.

Hayley Miro

PHOTOGRAPHY

Students planning to work in photography are able to draw inspiration and learn techniques from many media and art forms. An exploration of the photographic image is informed by art and aesthetics as well as the possibilities and limitations of the resources and equipment available to you. Both will determine the journey your photography will take.

Light makes photography. Embrace light. Admire it. Love it. But above all, know light. Know it for all you are worth, and you will know the key to photography.

George Eastman, founder of Eastman Kodak

Learning from others

Our life is saturated with images. Collecting and curating a selection to analyse can be a daunting prospect; there are so many to choose from. A multi-pronged approach can help. Collect images that really appeal to you (and those that don't). At the same time, explore images in styles similar to the product you are proposing. Don't restrict yourself to photographs. Select images from all art and media forms – photographs, film stills, advertisements, paintings and print productions. Go to galleries to physically experience photographs in addition to seeing them online and in books.

At first, simply collect images, then begin the curation process. Sort your collection using some or all of the following categories: subject matter, audience, emotional impact and purpose. Analyse the aesthetic elements that suggest meaning, including image composition, symbolic and technical codes and conventions, technology, art elements and design principles (see page 38).

Spend a little time examining images that do not engage you. Make notes about these too, so you know exactly what it is you don't like about the images.

If you admire the work of a particular photographer, analyse their body of work to see what you can learn about how image construction reflects a personal style. Research their work practices and make notes to inform the development of your own images.

In photography, the smallest thing can be a great subject. The little human detail can become a leitmotiv.

Henri Cartier-Bresson

Developing skills

At the same time as you are studying photographs in all their forms, develop your knowledge and skills in photographic design, production and post-production. This will involve research into both equipment and aesthetics.

A happy snapper takes shots; a photographer makes an image. The difference is context and thought. With smartphones we are all happy snappers. Look through the shots on your phone; they are almost entirely snapshots of your life, which is fine – the technology enables us to record life as we find it. Photographers want more.

It is a simple fact of life that the more images you make, consciously and with intent, the better your photography will become. If you have access to the camera you will use for your production, get used to taking it with you everywhere and setting yourself a project each day. Try this: choose one feature on the camera and one art element to focus on and use these to create a series of images as the focus for your work for one day. Change your focus each day until you have covered all features and elements and then start again. Over time, you will come to know your camera and become very focused on the aesthetics of image construction. Life is different with a camera in your hand.

The best camera is the one that's with you.

Chase Jarvis, iPhoneographer

If all you have is a smartphone, then use it to develop your ability to visualise and create beautifully composed images. Take the challenge above, modifying it slightly to keep the settings on your phone the same but incorporating two art elements in each image.

As you create images, add them to your folio or blog and annotate them in the same way you do for the professional images you source.

Post-production software and printing

All images need post-production image correction, even if they look fabulous on the screen. Sometimes the tweaks will be subtle, at other times they will be dramatic. Use the workflow described on page 49 as a basis for your image correction.



Figure 10.3 There are many steps between the source image and the final image. VCE student Ella Child worked long and hard to take her source image to the final product.

Create and evaluate test prints using different printers and papers to inform the development of your photography production. Sample packs are available from paper manufacturers. Print the same image each time to ensure that your analysis is accurate. Download and use one of the many test prints available.

Suggested areas of technical exploration for photography

- The relationship between ISO, shutter speed and aperture
- Controlling depth of field for aesthetic and structural effect
- Shutter speed – stilling and blurring movement
- Camera angles
- Image composition
- Symbolic and technical codes and conventions
- Lighting
- Post-production workflow and software, including editing RAW and JPEG images
- Paper stock and printing
- Methods of presentation

PRINT PRODUCTIONS

Students who plan to work in print will investigate products across a range of styles. This research should concentrate on products in the style of the proposed production but also evaluate the structural and aesthetic features and codes and conventions of print productions in different styles and genres. The conventions of some print production genres such as fine art or women's magazines are highly codified, but those in genres such as design, indie magazines and zines often playfully reference aesthetic and structural elements from many styles and genres. Commercial print productions such as *Frankie* magazine are testimony to the success of print mashups. *Frankie* references the codes and conventions of women's magazines as well as those of self-help, lifestyle and zine genres.

When studying the structural and aesthetic qualities of print productions, analyse the contribution of layout conventions, including the balance between text, image and white or negative space. Why are some magazines text and image dense while others are spare and restrained? How does this impact on audience engagement?

Magazines rely on advertising as well as sales for revenue. Those that contain little advertising often have more sponsored content. How much advertising is there and where is it located?

What paper stock is used? The physical and aesthetic qualities of paper stock impact on reader engagement through their tactile response. The weight, measured in gsm (grams per square metre), the finish, which can range from high gloss to deeply textured matt, and even the shade of white in different papers impact on a reader's assessment of the quality of a production. Some paper stocks are considered more sophisticated than others. What effect does the selection of paper stock have on audience engagement with a production?

The style of binding is a convention linked to genre and style. How is the magazine bound and what impact does this have on the experience of consuming the text? Do you prefer staples or perfect binding? Which binding technique will you use?



Figure 10.4 Perfect binding (left) and stapled binding (right) are just two of your choices.

The analysis of a range of print productions will inform further research into the possibilities and limitations of the software and reproduction options available to you.

Zines

The creation of zines can arise out of necessity or desire. If you have few resources available to you, a zine can be a great way to get your story out there with little technology. Many students, however, choose to create a zine because they love the aesthetic and the fact that they are not so constrained by the 'rules' of print production. A zine can be whatever you want it to be.

Zines are the ultimate form of homage. They can reference anything, everything or nothing. If you plan to create a zine, your task for this area of study is to study how zines reference many media forms.

The first step is to research great zines. The Sticky Institute is a good place to start. Don't forget to check out their Tumblr site.

The type of reproduction zine creators select determines the form of a zine. If a zine is to be photocopied, the paper stock must be photocopiable. If it is to be printed on a fine art printer, the range of papers is wider. If it is to be created by hand, then any paper or other material can be used. As part of your research, investigate the impact of reproduction on the form and style of zines. Find and evaluate examples, then test the different types of reproduction available to you. Record notes about your findings in your investigation folio.



Weblink

Suggested areas of technical exploration for print production

As for photography, plus:

- Typography
- The grid
- Magazine styles and audience expectation and engagement.
- Production workflow and software
- Paper stock and printing
- Methods of presentation, including binding

SHORT FILM

Short film story structures

Although you have a great deal of experience in reading film structures, most of the films you have seen will have been features. Short films are different; not lesser, just different. The best productions in short film work with the possibilities of the form, rather than attempt an idea that it cannot adequately convey.

A short film or video sequence is not a feature film; that is, it does not have the ability to introduce, develop and resolve complex or extended ideas, stories and characters in the same way that feature film does. Nor should it attempt to.

Short film and video productions make every second count. There is no room for flab; the concept must grab the audience within seconds, intriguing them sufficiently to pay attention from the very beginning.

If you plan to work in video or film production, try to watch as many short films as possible. Begin with Short of the Week. The Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) houses an enormous collection of short films, and it is likely that your school is a member. Ask your teacher to take your class on an excursion to the Mediatheque or hire a collection of short films for you to study.

Today, short films are only a mouse click away through online film festivals. Try any one of these sites and you are bound to be inspired:

- Films SHORT
- Media That Matters Film Festival
- Tropfest.

For each of the short films you watch, make notes about how the story is structured. Make notes about the following features of the films you have watched. Use screenshots to support your analysis.

Short films use a three-act structure, but the acts may not be evenly balanced.

- Act 1: The set-up. Who is this? Where are we? What is happening? Why should I care? One or two characters and narrative possibilities are established. Openings are limited and tight. The narrative hook may deliver audiences to the middle of the action, before the set-up.
- Act 2: The point of no return. Tension rises. Characters must choose a path.
- Act 3: Climax and resolution. Narrative possibilities are resolved, there may be a surprise or a question is posed. The best short films leave the audience thinking.

Investigate the balance between visual information and dialogue. In contrast to feature films, which are often heavy on dialogue, short film is a more visual form. Everything in the frame contributes to the story.

Short films do not rely on effects. There are few fights or physical journeys; it is all about action and reaction. Short films often make do with available locations. Short films challenge the audience. With little time to develop a relationship between characters and the audience, short films must create a reaction. Short films are an exercise in restraint. Less is more, because the story structure is required to work much harder than in feature films. Rather than **exposition**, short films are a snapshot or a glimpse of a wider world.



Charlie Richardson

Figure 10.5 Charlie Richardson's 2014 VCE film *Stolen*, which featured in Top Screen, packed a lot into three acts.

Genre

Although their story structure is different, short films often reference feature films, particularly in terms of genre conventions. This technique works because audiences read generic codes and conventions in the same way whether the film is a feature or a short. Genre can thus be used as a short cut to convey a great deal of complex information in one shot, sound or character. The audience will fill in the gaps.

Suggested areas of technical exploration for short film

- Scriptwriting
- Storyboarding
- Camera operation
- The relationship between ISO, shutter speed and aperture
- Shot composition and blocking
- Symbolic and technical codes and conventions
- Lighting
- Recording sound
- Post-production workflow and software
- Special effects
- Colour grading



Max Bresztynski

Figure 10.6 Colour, sound and framing were codes used to structure horror in Max Bresztynski's VCE film *Final Exposure*.

ANIMATION

Students who plan to work in animation will be informed by the discussion of short film structure above but also by art and technology. Animation forms include everything from flip books to 3D computer-generated simulations. A friendly word of warning for potential animators: Year 12 is not the time to learn 3D animation; it will eat your life. If you are thinking about working in animation, consider stop-motion, claymation, 2D hand-drawn animation, cel animation or Flash.

Each animated form has its own particular structural and aesthetic qualities. Collect and analyse examples of the styles you are considering. How does the nature of the form of each engage audiences? Capture stills from animations and annotate them. Discuss the qualities of each style and consider the practical aspects of creating work in them. Search out Disney's iconic text *The Illusion of Life*.

Animation is not for everyone. Yes, it is time-consuming, but so are quality works in every media form. Analyse how the examples you are studying were produced and whether you will be able to employ similar production and post-production techniques. More information is available on NelsonNet.

The first question to consider is form: hand-drawn, stop-motion or computer animation? The answer to this question will depend on whether you can draw and on your computing skills. After this decision, you need to determine how long it will take to produce one second of animation. If you need an animation stage, can you create one at school or at home? If planning a stop-motion animation or claymation, will you have access to a camera and lighting for the duration of the process? If you have to share equipment, how can you ensure continuity?

To determine whether animation is the best media form in which to demonstrate your skills and creativity, devise a series of short exercises that answer the questions above, develop your skills and test the equipment and software available to you. Analyse your work, annotating each experiment to demonstrate your growing knowledge of the aesthetic qualities of the media form and illustrate the development of your skills. Make notes about the limitations of different styles of animation for conveying your proposed story.

Suggested areas of technical exploration for animation

As for short film, plus:

- Comparison of the possibilities and limitations of animation technologies and styles
- Experiments in animation techniques
- Production and post-production software and workflow
- Continuity techniques

AUDIO

Sound production opens up a world of possibilities, and students who are thinking of working in this medium can do no better than turning to the internet for inspiration. There are thousands of streamed radio sites that will be great sources of reference and technique.

Link the URLs of the sites you use for investigating audio productions in your blog so that your teacher can listen too. You may need to create scripts or visual representations of the structure of the works you analyse to build your knowledge of the form.

Radio/audio is an intimate medium. It invites listeners on a journey using only one of their senses – hearing – to listen and read sound, which is measured by its presence and by its absence. A sound may be used alone or in conjunction with other sounds. In most productions, sound is layered, inviting audiences to make their way through layers that when heard together construct meaning.

The quality of sound reproduction is important. Like the productions you investigate for this area of study, you will be asking your audience to identify with and respond to location, mood, character, motivation and storyline or content; in short, to engage with your product and travel the journey you have designed for them using their hearing alone. Audience engagement with an aural text will be competing with a whole range of other stimuli, so in its attempt to control the audience's desire to keep listening the product must engage from the first moments. This is a tough ask. Make notes about how each of the productions you study structures audience engagement.

In his excellent book *Making Radio* (2000), Steve Ahern describes three elements of the audio mix:

- voice
- music
- FX.

Ahern also outlines some simple rules for the mix, including:

- Keep the message clear – don't overwhelm it with embellishment.
- Enhance the message with effects that will heighten rather than swamp it.
- Please your listeners – entertain, enlighten or inform.

Analyse audio productions in terms of Ahern's advice. Think about how to design these rules into the layers that will comprise both the story and production elements of your production. Investigate how audio narratives are constructed.

Suggested areas of technical exploration for audio production

- Scriptwriting
- Audio sequencing
- Symbolic and technical codes and conventions
- Microphone technologies
- Recording sound
- Post-production workflow and software
- Special effects

DIGITAL OR ONLINE MEDIA

This fast-moving, ever-changing collection of media forms allows you to work in media that may not have been invented at the time the study design was written. It is impossible to pin down the term 'digital media'; after all, most students will employ digital technologies at some stage in the completion of their media production. For the purposes of this area of study, digital media is understood to be work that is presented or consumed in digital form.

Screen capture and link the sites or products you are investigating into your blog. Your analysis should focus on three areas: design, usability and content.

Students working in digital or online media usually have a good grasp of technology, but this does not necessarily have to be the case. The decision to present an idea digitally may result from consideration of the best way of conveying a complex idea, such as a 'choose your own adventure' story. As with all media forms, you do have to create your production from scratch; templates are not acceptable.

For this outcome, test your skills and ideas so that you are quite sure about your ability to create content that will look and sound good in any format. Students who work in multimedia often have access to sophisticated computers; your audience may not. Everyone has their preferred browser; check how your production exercises and experiments look on a range of browsers and smartphones.

Software, file management and access privileges all need to be factored into your production design; there is little point planning a streaming video site, for example, if you don't have the appropriate software or access rights to the server on which you would need to store your files.

Some students plan for websites that use dynamic content. If you are considering such an approach, be aware of the issues that you must resolve. For example:

- Dynamic and user-generated content raises the issue of authenticity. How will you demonstrate which content is yours and which has been generated by users of your site? How will you deal with copyright for those aspects of your work that you did not create?
- How does your teacher require your production to be submitted? How will you handle the matter of server side content? If you submit your work online, how will you lock the site off on the due date?

Suggested areas of exploration for digital or online production

- Video, audio and image content as for the appropriate media form above
- Technical aspects of online production, including hardware and software
- Symbolic and technical codes and conventions
- Production workflow and software
- Aesthetics and usability

CONVERGENT OR HYBRIDISED MEDIA

How wonderful it is to be able to work in a study where new technologies and forms are constantly emerging! Convergent media forms mean that the boundaries delineating the possibilities for media productions are forever blurred.

Students planning a production that crosses media forms are encouraged to do so, but do need to stay in close contact with their teacher throughout the design and production phases. It is all too easy

to plan a production that is conceptually amazing, but technically or organisationally impossible. Use the information provided above to guide you in your investigation of the media forms you plan to use in your convergent production. Be prepared to make some careful judgements about what each will contribute to your production. Protect yourself and your VCE – be very careful in your enthusiasm to avoid overcommitment, but do remember to enjoy yourself!

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Activity 10.6 What have I learnt that will inform my production?

Reflect on your work in Media over the past year and a half.

- 1 Have a look over your notes and flick through earlier chapters of this textbook to find material that will help you design and produce your media production. Write a list of these and share them with your classmates.
- 2 Create a class list of top 10 tips for media production design based on your earlier learning in Media.

Activity 10.7 Brainstorming possibilities for your production

Create a series of brainstorms that are informed by your work for this outcome in which you explore ideas for your production. Begin with the story or narrative then add in elements that tease out your style, genre and the codes and conventions you can use to construct your idea. Discuss your brainstorms with your teacher and your classmates and reflect on the advice they give you.

Activity 10.8 The pitch: moving from concept to pre-production

Spend some time looking over and reflecting on your learning for this outcome. By now you should know the media form in which you plan to work and have a clear idea about the nature and form of your proposed production.

Create and present a **pitch** to your teacher and classmates. Invite them to ask questions and challenge your ideas. Make notes about their feedback to use in refining your proposal.

When your pitch is successful, you will have the go-ahead to design your media production.



OUTCOME 3

On completion of this unit the student should be able to develop and document a media production design in a selected media form for a specified audience.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 3.

KEY KNOWLEDGE

- methods for documenting the specified audiences, narrative and intention of the proposed production
- media codes and conventions, technologies and processes relevant to the selected media form, proposed audience, narrative and production
- methods for creating written and visual representations of a proposed production
- methods for documenting details of production and post-production roles, tasks and timelines
- media language relevant to the design and production of a media product in a selected media form.

KEY SKILLS

- document the specified audience, narrative and intention relevant to a selected media form and product
- apply media codes and conventions, technologies and production processes appropriate to the selected media form, proposed audience, narrative and product
- create written and visual representations of a proposed production
- document production and post-production roles, tasks and timelines
- use media language appropriate to the design and production of a media product in a selected media form.

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I have a notebook, and I know what decisions will be made in pre-production. Everything is predetermined in the pre-production period. I visually design the whole thing, and I know when things will happen.

Alejandro González Iñárritu

For this outcome, you will create a media production design for the product you are going to produce in Unit 4. This design will communicate your creative vision and demonstrate thorough planning. Your production design will model industry practices and approximate, as closely as is possible within the VCE, the pre-production, production and post-production processes used by media professionals.

Once your teacher has given your production design the **green light**, you will have the opportunity to make minor adjustments, if necessary, during production and post-production, but you cannot change your media form or concept. You are going to live and breathe your production design for several months, so it is important that you love it and are 100 per cent committed. Thorough planning now will ensure a smooth production process and a successful product.

If chess has any relationship to filmmaking, it would be in the way it helps you develop patience and discipline in choosing between alternatives at a time when an impulsive decision seems very attractive.

Stanley Kubrick

While it is always fun to try something new, the VCE is not a game of chance and you should work to the strengths you have consolidated over the course of Outcome 2. You have investigated the media form in which you will work, developed skills in the equipment available and tested the aesthetic and technical possibilities of this equipment for the ideas you have. Now is the time to design the production you have been working towards.

THE SCOPE OF TASK

The VCAA has set the scope of task for the Media school-assessed task as follows:

- A video or film production of 3–10 minutes in length, including title and credit sequences.
- An animated production of no more than 10 minutes in length, including title and credit sequences.
- A radio or an audio production of a minimum of 8 minutes in length, including title and credit sequences.
- A digital or an analogue photographic presentation, sequence or series of a minimum of 10 original sourced images shot, processed and edited by the student.
- A digital or traditional print production of a minimum of 8 pages produced and edited by the student.
- A digital and/or an online production that demonstrates comparable complexity consistent with the other media forms.
- A convergent or hybridised media production that incorporates aspects of a range of media forms and is consistent with product durations and the descriptors listed.

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The scope of task is designed to ensure some comparability between the work required for those working in different media forms and on productions of different complexity. A 30-second stop-motion claymation, for example, can be as complex to produce as a 12-page glossy fashion magazine, a highly complex five-minute narrative, a 15-minute podcast or a single photographic montage comprising 20 original images. If you are unsure about the length or complexity of your proposed production, study the criteria for assessment, which provide a guide as to what is expected of works at different levels of complexity, technical and aesthetic creativity.

It is very important to stay within the scope of task set by the VCAA. For those media forms where there is a minimum specified scope of task, it is very difficult to satisfy the outcome if the minimum is not met. Students working in video and animation should be careful to design and create works that do not exceed 10 minutes. Your teacher is not permitted to assess any work over this time.

Consult your teacher about your proposal before you begin your production design. It is important to note that you may not begin the creation of your media production, including taking photographs or video footage, until your teacher has signed off on your production design.

Scope of task: help or hindrance?

Many students ask why the VCAA specifies the scope of the Media production. There are a number of reasons, of which the following are the most important:

- to ensure that students undertake and complete a project that is achievable at the highest level in the time available for the production
- to protect students from setting a goal that is too ambitious for the marks allocated
- to ensure equality in the workload between VCE studies.

The scope of task can be frustrating for those who have a burning passion to make a longer work, but remember, no filmmaker's career begins with a feature. The media production process is complex and, unlike professional productions, you are responsible for every role. This is an opportunity to plan for and achieve a production that is contained and can be executed at the highest quality. Your feature film or animation, coffee table book, multinational social media site or 30-minute soapie will have to wait.

Help! I haven't got a clue!

There are always those who struggle with settling on a subject for their production even after Outcome 2. Usually these students are overwhelmed by the possibilities. If this is you, look back on your work for Outcome 2, take a deep breath, get out a blank piece of paper and begin a series of brainstorming like those illustrated in Chapter 2. Jot down ideas, possibilities and limitations. When you have decided on a subject, brainstorm style, genre and aesthetics.

Somebody's got to live a real life so we have something to make a movie about.

Cameron Crowe

Keep it real

Some students assume that bigger is always better, but in media production the best works are rarely overproduced extravaganzas. Rather, they are smaller but perfectly formed works that examine one key idea in detail. They are often about the issues of everyday life that students know so well.

Audiences always enjoy an insight into the lives of others; we like to get inside people's heads and have a bit of a look around. Think about harvesting your life for subject matter. Search your bedroom for production ideas. What will you find there? Do you still have those *Star Wars* models and posters from when you were a huge fan? You will never be able to use these to make the next blockbuster in the series, but you can investigate your fascination for *Star Wars*. Your audience will love it; after all, they too shared the same fascination, which creates a narrative hook through the fondness of your shared memories.

No matter how ordinary your life seems, think laterally about how you could use your inside knowledge of pony clubs, your uncle's job, computers, disability, Lego, Barbie or the interesting old lady down the street. Use anything or anyone you know. Think exploration, documentary, narrative, photo essay or digital portrait – the possibilities are endless.

WHAT IS A MEDIA PRODUCTION DESIGN?

A production design is a collection of documents formatted using industry-specific language, codes and conventions and processes that form the blueprint for a production in a selected media form for a specified audience. The design will comprise written and visual representations of the proposed product. There is no designated structure for a media production design. Students select a format that works for them, which may include notebooks, folios, plastic folders, websites, blogs and/or wikis. Anybody reading a media production design should recognise the use of industry-specific design practices and, from the documents provided, be able to visualise the final product.

If you have completed Units 1 and 2 Media, you will have created production designs for the tasks required by those units. In Units 3 and 4, the school-assessed task is worth 40 per cent of your study score and the production design becomes an important and substantial piece of work. It is assessed in its own right as part of the SAT but, just as importantly, plays a significant role of structuring your creativity during the creation of the concept and organising your workflow in pre-production, production and post-production.

What is in a production design?

Some elements are common to all media production designs, including:

- audience
- intention and techniques to engage the audience
- narrative and structure of the proposed work
- style and/or genre
- instructions for cast and crew
- production documentation as required, such as copyright permissions, call sheets, talent release forms and location agreements.

Other elements are specific to each media form and are detailed on pages 32–3.

Engaging your audience

No matter which media form you choose to work in, it is your audience that sits at the centre of every decision you will make in your production design. You must specify a designated audience for your production. That is not to say that other audiences might not be engaged by your work, but there will be a particular audience for which it is designed.

Chapter 2 details how to determine your audience, characterising their needs and interests as well as several methods of documenting this information. Reread the section beginning on page 25 to begin the process of articulating a specific audience and detailing how you will engage them. A comprehensive audience statement is an important feature of your production design.

Activity 11.1 Defining an audience takes time

- 1 Create a table like the one below to help you define and describe your audience, its tastes, expectations and experience.

Who is my audience or audiences?	My audience demographics include:	Audience interests, experience and expectations of media works in this form:	How will my audience be engaged by my production?

- 2 Now use your table to develop a comprehensive audience statement about your target market. You may include the relevant sections of your table and other material, such as illustrations or examples, as supporting evidence.



Figure 11.1 It is easy to determine the audience for Tim Cogan's fashion video.

Activity 11.2 Multiple audiences, multiple readings

The best media productions speak on many levels to a wide demographic. Think about this as you design your media production over the next few weeks.

- 1 What is it about your proposed product that will appeal to a wider audience than the one you have defined in Activity 11.1? Create a graphical representation such as a Venn diagram to outline the characteristics of a range of possible audiences.
- 2 Try to find characteristics that each audience has in common, and include these in the overlapping sections of your diagram. This information will point to aspects of your audience that are more important than others, allowing you to target your design more effectively.
- 3 Study audience statements on the ATOM Season of Excellence website. What can you learn from these that will inform your description of audience?



Weblink

Top Designs and Top Screen

Have you been to Top Designs and Top Screen? Ask your teacher to arrange an excursion, or take yourself along. These exhibitions and screenings of the very best work from the previous year's VCE are a wonderful source of inspiration. You won't enjoy everything, but you will learn much. There are also workshops conducted by the State Reviewer for Media, where you can learn how productions were made as well as tips and tricks that you can use in your production.

The VCAA Season of Excellence, of which these exhibitions are a part, takes place over Terms 1 and 2. Follow the weblink to learn more.

While you are at Top Designs, have a look at the works in all media forms, not just the one in which you will work. For each work, ask: Why was this piece selected and what can I learn from it? Most importantly, plan to be selected for Top Designs next year. Good luck!

A feature of Top Designs is the selection of media production designs that are available in the exhibition and online. Top Screen productions are available on DVD from the VCAA. The Top Designs Facebook page has all kinds of tips and links. A number of students whose work has appeared in Top Screen have put their work on YouTube or Vimeo. Search them out.



Weblink

INTENTION

All media productions are designed for engagement and impact; their purpose is to change the audience in some way. Now that you have an audience, how do you want to change them? What do you want the impact of your production on your audience to be? Here are some possibilities:

- educate
- entertain
- shock
- make laugh
- reduce to tears
- outrage
- provide a moment of peace
- encourage a particular behaviour or thought process
- persuade
- please
- think.

Once you have decided on your intention, it is time to think about how you will structure your production to achieve these goals. Perhaps you want the emotion of the work to speak to your audience of a deeper truth; or maybe while they are laughing they will also learn the lesson your production is designed to teach. What structural features and symbolic codes and conventions will you use to create the engagement with the text you intend?

Your plan should clearly convey both your intention and the techniques you will employ to engage your audience and achieve this intention. There are many different ways to express this information – you don't necessarily have to use text. Some students and media professionals prefer an integrated approach using images, film excerpts or diagrams. Have a look at some production designs online for ideas.

ANNOTATED INSPIRATION AND REFERENCING

In your work for Outcome 2, you collected examples of media techniques that you found engaging or that you might use in your production. Now is the time to edit and curate these references into a brief and focused analysis of how they inform your production design. The aim here is quality, not quantity. Think of your referencing as a kind of visual and written mood board that illustrates the best of your learning from Outcome 2 and how it relates to your proposed production. The link should be clearly apparent in both your referencing and in the production design. Each reference should be carefully annotated to explain why it has been included and how you might use the idea or technique to inform your production.

Appropriation

In Chapter 2, we discussed the issue of Andy Warhol and appropriation (see page 31). If the nature of your production determines that you must incorporate pre-existing material, then plan and document how you will ensure that the material does not detract from your ability to demonstrate the individual and distinctive nature of your product. Ask your teacher for advice.

Documenting instructions for cast and crew

Some students like to appear in their own productions. For others, the production requires a crew. If this is the case, read the section on authentication on page 329. If you do require a cast or crew to assist you in the completion of your production, you are required to document the roles and specific tasks they will undertake. This documentation can be in the form of, for example, written instructions, diagrams of camera and sound placement and movement, call sheets and shot lists. Remember, you are in charge and must set up and operate as much of the equipment as possible. You cannot outsource any production or post-production roles.

It's all about getting the camera into the right position, into that exact position that you want it and getting the camera movement that you want.

Simon Duggan ACS, Australian cinematographer on *The Great Gatsby* and *Hacksaw Ridge*

DESIGNING FOR PARTICULAR MEDIA FORMS

Each media form has a design language and methodology all of its own. Using appropriate terminology and design conventions demonstrates your control over the media form. Those reading your design will know exactly what you intend to produce.

Your production design should specify every aspect of your proposed production. Depending on your intention, some elements of your design will require extensive elaboration, while others may merit only a brief mention. Your intention will determine the degree of detail you include.

Tick off the media design elements required for your proposed production as you include them.

Write the kind of movie you would want to see in a genre you love.

Douglas Wood, writer, director and producer

Audiovisual film and video productions

Scope of task: A video or film production of 3–10 minutes in length, including title and credit sequences.

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Production design elements relevant to video, film and animation productions are:

- plot and/or outline of content, such as a **synopsis** or treatment
- appropriately formatted script
- storyboards
- shot lists
- costume and make-up
- locations and/or setting
- dialogue, narration and/or interview questions
- details of camera – framing, position and movement, such as a shot list and **blocking** plan
- edit details and transitions
- lighting plans and details
- sound design including music and/or sound effects
- copyright clearance if required
- title and credits sequences.

See NelsonNet for masters of a range of audiovisual production documents.

The short film or video production is a specialised form of audiovisual communication. Short film and video productions make every second count and, interestingly, the best student films do not usually push the 10-minute limit, but are a tightly edited five or six minutes.

Most students plan to make a short narrative, documentary, music video clip or experimental video, but why not think outside the box? The scope of task is very broad; you could create a series of ads, a multiscreen video installation or even a segment for a lifestyle or current affairs program.

Whatever genre and style you decide to work in, ensure that you research the codes and conventions of that genre. Include this research in your annotated inspiration and referencing. Why? Because to make your text individual and/or distinctive, you will need to borrow, bend or break the generic rules!



Scaffold

Screenwriting

The key to writing a good short film script is authenticity. This is because the story must come from within. There are some wonderful websites with great tips for screenwriting. Try some of these:

- Seven rules for writing short film
- How to write and rewrite a short film
- What is the key to writing a good short film script?
- Emotional storytelling Pixar style.

When your script is done, you will pitch it to your teacher and the class. Consider using the Screen Australia method of writing a one-line, one-paragraph and one-page synopsis, as outlined in their document 'What is a synopsis? An outline? A treatment?'.

If you can't explain your production in one line, you are not in control of it.

Storyboarding

Every shot must be storyboarded. There are tips and tricks covered in Chapter 2, but for now why not learn from one of the masters, Ridley Scott?

Scott advises that storyboard artists start with a thumbnail sketch then fill the frame. For him:

Storyboards become like a sophisticated comic strip. Ideally that's what a storyboard should be because you're seeing the dynamics ... if it's really well drawn you can follow the dynamics of the sequence.

If you are interested in the entire illustrated interview, search for 'The Art of Storyboarding with Ridley Scott' online.



Weblink

Some audiovisual production ideas

- A day in the life ...
- An exploration of an idea, person, relationship, emotion, sound or colour
- Overcoming the odds
- What it is like to live ...
- A movie promotion for an imaginary film
- An advertising campaign – with or without a narrative connection between ads
- A journey, physical or metaphorical
- Suburban bliss ... or horror
- The making of another student's production
- A reflexive documentary on a topic close to your heart
- A music video
- Welcome to ...
- A current affairs or opinionative piece
- Why do so many people like ...
- A digital project

If nothing seems to inspire, then you can always make a promotional video for your school. It is surprising how the thought of having to undertake such a production motivates students, which is a pity because a well-made promo would be a wonderful testament to your creativity and passion for media.



Figure 11.2 Why not try a silent film as Broderick McDonald did?

Animation

Scope of task: An animated production of no more than 10 minutes in length, including title and credit sequences.

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Production design elements relevant to animation are as for audiovisual productions, plus (as appropriate to the form and style):

- character and object design
- stage design

- background design
- character blocking
- synched sound design, including lip synching
- timing, pace and rhythm.

In animation anything is possible. You create the universe and everything in it. In your universe, you create the laws of nature. Interestingly, however, these rules of nature reference to a greater or lesser degree the rules of nature by which we live, albeit somewhat exaggerated. That is what makes animation so appealing; it is real, but not.

Animation is the opportunity to tell a big story about war and peace, or a small story about a leaf blowing in the wind. Use the three-act structure outlined on page 308 to design your narrative.

Animation is about movement; characters and objects move through the frame, and sound makes a significant but lesser contribution. Creating movement takes time and skill. Think about your story: do you have the skills and the time? Follow the weblink to some animation resources.

By now you will have decided on the animation form of your choice. Before progressing any further on your production design, check to see if your school has the equipment you need. If more than one student is planning to work in animation, does the school have enough equipment? One of the biggest problems for animators is continuity. If you have to share a light stand, for example, how will you ensure that you can maintain control over continuity in your shots? Small lapses that may go unnoticed in video are all too visible in animation, where continuity of movement can be vital to the authenticity of most animation forms or stories.

Animation often looks deceptively simple, but in reality, it is very difficult to do it well, and will certainly be extraordinarily time-consuming. That is why most animations are so short.

Design considerations for animation

The process of designing animation begins with a concept. A storyboard and soundtrack are the next stages, as the sound is generally recorded before the animation. This makes for a controlled production where vision and sound can be accurately matched. You should design the soundtrack at the same time as you create your storyboard – a rough cut of the soundtrack will mean that your storyboard can be more accurate, and you will be able to anticipate and plan around any potential problems.

One feature of more sophisticated animation is the use of camera angles that match the on-screen action. While the point of animation is to animate rather than to use the camera to simulate animation, by combining both, most animations can be enhanced. Consider designing a two-camera set-up for your shoot. It may allow you to convey your idea more effectively by making cut-ins and close-ups possible without doubling your workload.

All Media students become so engrossed in their production that they can occasionally lose sight of what the audience will make of it. This seems to be especially true of animators, for whom every frame becomes a focus of attention. It is easy to miss the big picture when working so intensively, and there is a risk that what is in your head may not be what appears on screen. Plan for this in the design process by factoring in a 'critical friend' or trial audience who will view your production in progress and will be sufficiently detached to be able to tell you if it doesn't hang together like you expect it will.

Some animation production ideas

• Birth, growth, death ... of anything	• A film title sequence
• An urban myth	• A moral
• A joke – yours or anyone else's	• A day in the life of an everyday object
• One beautiful idea	• One dark moment
• Fear	• A philosophical or spiritual idea
• Joy	• Transitions
• A punchline	• An instructional sequence
• Music video	• An idea that plays with the idea of animation

Radio or audio

Scope of task: A radio or an audio production of a minimum of 8 minutes in length, including title and credit sequences.

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Weblink

Production design elements relevant to radio or audio are:

- storyline and/or outline of content, such as a treatment
- sound design
- sound capture – microphones, position and movement
- appropriately formatted script
- location and/or setting
- dialogue, narration and/or interview questions
- edit, layering and/or sequencing details
- music and/or sound effects
- copyright clearance if required
- title and credits sequences.

The scope of task for audio suggests ways in which this media form may be tackled. There is no time to develop a music program or emulate a commercial radio format. Instead, what is intended is more complex. It is possible to create a completely convincing and feasible fictional world unrestrained by the rules of nature that normally govern our real lives. Animals and inanimate objects may find a voice; monsters, angels and characters from different times and places can be let loose inside your audience's head through the sounds and stories you create. Or you can create a non-fictional work, perhaps in documentary or a piece of investigative journalism.

Radio audiences

A particular aspect of audience for students working in sound is the listening context in which your production will be consumed. This will impact on the content and production of your work:

- Where will your audience be, and what else will they be doing while listening to your work?
- What equipment will your audience be using to listen to your production? Will they be in a sound booth or using a personal stereo on public transport? Will they use high-quality surround sound, cheap in-built computer speakers or a portable radio?
- Above all, consider how much control you will be able to exert on the engagement of your audience, and how you will attract, retain and enhance this engagement.

Audiences for all media forms vary in their experience and expectations; this is no less so for radio audiences, who have perhaps a greater range of styles and genres from which to choose than audiences for any other medium. Older audiences remember the golden days of radio – ask your grandparents. The next generation were the first to experience radio on the move through transistors and car radios. For your generation, radio means something quite different again, depending on the type of radio to which you listen; commercial or Triple J – both are very different, as are online audio forms such as streamed podcasts.

Designing for sound

Begin with your concept and build the layers from there. There are a number of ways of designing a sound production. You may decide on a traditional script, or you may choose to design your product using a sequencing chart, like those in nonlinear multitrack audio editing programs. A sound sequencing chart can be found on NelsonNet.



Interviews and dialogue

The qualities of voice are very important. Radio productions must clearly establish the role of each participant, so plan for voices to be clearly distinguishable from each other. This is especially important if the cast is greater than two. In non-fiction works, allow the subject to tell their own story. Of course, you can break the rules – just listen to any breakfast presenters! Consider the qualities of the voices of your actors and interviewees, aim for contrast and complementary delivery. Audition actors before casting them. Be prepared to digitally enhance voices if necessary.

Technological considerations

Technology and software for high-quality sound production are now readily available. Ask your music department or friends who are doing VET Broadcasting for help.

It is important to think about the quality of sound you will reproduce. As part of your production design, beg, borrow or steal the very best quality microphones you can. It is possible to correct, balance and equalise sound in the mixing stage, but poor-quality sound will always be poor-quality sound. Get it right in the design stage, and you will be well placed to take your audience on the journey you plan for them.

Some radio/audio production ideas

- Documentary segments on a subject about which you are passionate and which can be conveyed aurally – nature and/or the built environment, school or a family are all examples that would work well
- A news segment or segments
- A series of ads
- A soundscape investigating an idea or location
- A comedy segment
- A narrative
- A piece of investigative journalism
- A meeting between God and the Devil, Captain Cook and the Prime Minister, or Alfred Hitchcock and Quentin Tarantino
- An experimental piece exploring the nature of sound
- An editorial or other opinionative piece exploring something you are passionate about
- A piece intended to be heard as an excerpt from a longer program or series
- A travelogue
- A moment in time or a day in the life ...
- Your pets talk to you

Photography

Scope of task: A digital or an analogue photographic presentation, sequence or series of a minimum of 10 original sourced images shot, processed and edited by the student.

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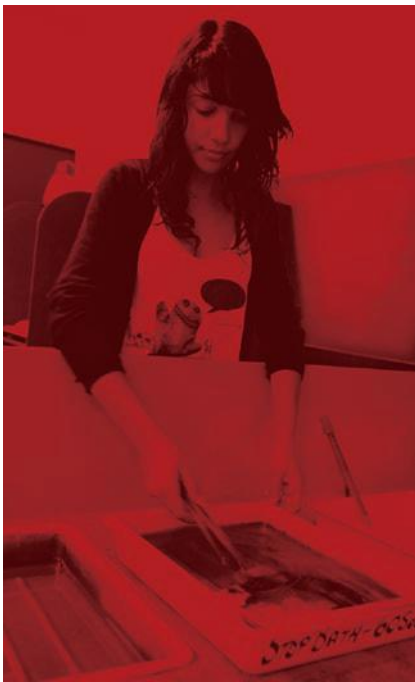


Figure 11.3 If your school has a darkroom, you can create silver gelatin images.

Production design elements relevant to photography are:

- camera, lens, processing and reproduction technologies
- subject/s and/or topic
- storyline if appropriate
- image composition and/or page layout designs
- location
- lighting
- paper stock, method of printing
- specialist techniques – for example, selective focus, filtration, manipulating contrast or colour, toning, hand colouring
- method of presentation and exhibition.

In recent years, the scope of photography has been greatly enhanced by advances in technology. Students planning a photographic presentation, sequence or series must consider their proposed content in the light of the technologies available to them, and the aesthetic possibilities and limitations of both subject and equipment for the intended audience and purpose. The first step is to check the equipment available at your school. This will have an enormous impact on your production design.

You will have worked through some of these considerations in your work for Outcome 2. Now you need to decide on the following:

- **Photographic medium:** Silver gelatin, digital, a combination of both or one of the specialty processes – in what medium can you produce your best work? How and where will you display your images? There is a world of difference between physical prints and those designed for viewing online.
- **Equipment and consumables:** What is available? What equipment will produce the highest quality work? What is the quality of the cameras, printers, enlargers, scanners and paper stock available to you? How can you make the most of what is available?
- **Aesthetics:** For the subject you are considering, which photographic medium will convey your intention most effectively?
- **Budget:** If you are thinking of presenting A1 or A3 prints, do you have the finances to be able to complete your project? How can you present your work with minimum expense and maximum effect? Bigger is not necessarily better.

What is a photographic presentation, sequence or series?

Your photographic production must hang together as an idea; it must have a coherent narrative theme running through it. The best work tends to suggest meaning rather than a literal interpretation of the subject. An exploration of a topic or idea generally offers scope for creativity. Think about photographic sequences and series you have seen in galleries, newspapers, magazines and online. Note how each is constructed and what you can learn from them.

How many finished images can I produce?

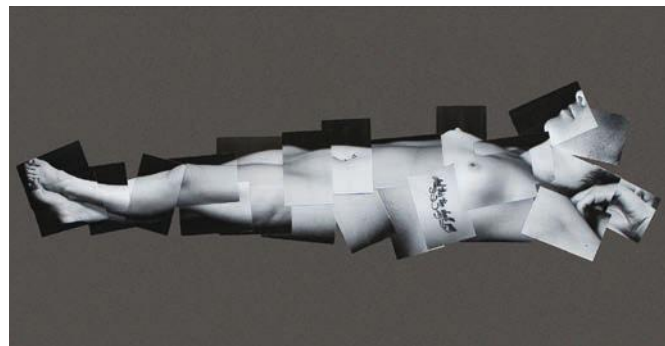
The scope of task for photography is designed to allow for creativity through the production of images in a number of forms. You may produce any number of works as long as you have incorporated a minimum of 10 original source images. This may mean 10 or more final works, if that is what is needed to realise your vision. Or if you are planning something more technically complex, your plan might be to create a lesser number of final works using techniques including sandwiched negatives, photomontage or stitched-together works such as David Hockney's 'joiners'. The decision is up to you. There is no minimum number of works; only a minimum number of original source images. How you proceed will be determined by the degree of difficulty of your proposal and your skill level.

Note the following:

- A minimum of 10 original source images should be evident in your final presentation.
- There is no maximum number of original source images or final prints.
- You must shoot, process and edit all images yourself.

Some photographic production ideas

• Landscape	• Detail
• Nature and/or the built environment	• Ritual
• Portraiture	• Celebration
• Decay	• Solitude
• Growth	• Movement
• The human form	• Emotion or control
• Line, pattern, texture, angles	• Documenting an event, place or person
• A local landmark	• New ways of seeing the familiar
• Beauty in the everyday	• Familiarity in the unfamiliar
• Conflict – ideas, people, places, form	• A photo essay on a newsworthy topic
• Change	



Bryony Wilson

Figure 11.4 Bryony Wilson was inspired by David Hockney's 'joiners' in this photographic production, which featured in Top Designs.

What is the difference between photography and print?

Once vastly different media forms, the convergence of technologies and style has seen the difference between a print layout and a photographic production come down to intention. Photography often uses text, and print productions usually include photographic images. If you are not sure what you are designing, investigate the differences between the scopes of task for each media form.

Print

Scope of task: A digital or traditional print production of a minimum of 8 pages produced and edited by the student.

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Production design elements relevant to print publications are as for photography, plus:

- typography
- content such as copy, images, illustrations, graphics
- binding
- digital publication if appropriate.

Students working in print have enormous flexibility in possible approaches to this task. The only definite is that you will produce a minimum of eight pages or layouts. Pages in bound print magazines and books are traditionally created in sets of four; if you are working in these forms, your production should match this convention.

The research you undertook for Outcome 2 will suggest a range of possibilities and limitations for your production, including the size of the finished product, the media on which you can print and the qualities that the printing technologies you may use will bring to the production.

Most schools have a range of printers, including photocopiers, laser and inkjet printers. Which ones can you use? If you have access to a printer outside school, what can it do for you? Your design will demonstrate to your teacher that you have the technical expertise to print your own work.

Depending on the printer you choose, decisions you will make include:

- colour or black and white
- paper stock, including weight, colour and finish – gloss, satin, matt, textured or specialty papers
- single- or double-sided printing
- bled or border printing
- paper size, typically A3, A4, A5 or a specialty original
- binding if applicable.

As with other media forms, the best student print productions explore subjects, genres and styles with which students are familiar. Where do you read? What do you like to read? What do you know about? Your collection of references should be full of annotated ideas torn, copied or photographed from the print productions you enjoy consuming. These will help you to formulate your design more effectively.

It is time to hone your ability to write engagingly in the style you are planning for your print production. Develop your journalism to ensure that it is consistent with your intention.

Magazine, zine, advertorial, church newsletter ...?

Many students produce magazines, but you are not confined to this form. What about a student newspaper, or a section of a newspaper such as the sports or IT pages? The line between newspapers, magazines and advertising is increasingly blurred. Perhaps you are interested in producing glossy real estate advertorials, like those that drop out of daily newspapers or are published online. Even catalogues, flyers and local newsletters are all possibilities. Many students produce zines or comic books.

Some ideas for a print production

- A school or community newsletter or magazine
- A fan magazine for a local band
- An instruction manual
- A food or car magazine
- A church newspaper
- An advertising layout
- A newspaper insert
- Political or advertising posters
- A theatre program
- A booklet on an area of study for one of your subjects
- An anthology of your own writing
- A street magazine or zine
- Your school sports report
- A keepsake for Year 12 or a school event
- A coffee table book or magazine
- Movie posters
- A graphic novel or manga comic
- A series of collectable posters



Figure 11.5 Taylor Albioli created a magazine about Daylesford. The work featured in Top Designs.

Digital and/or online productions

Scope of task: A digital and/or an online production that demonstrates comparable complexity consistent with the other media forms.

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Production design elements relevant to digital and/or online productions are:

- format
- method of presentation or exhibition
- content
- sequencing
- screen design and/or page design
- technical considerations
- functionality and/or interactivity
- typography
- images and graphical elements – for example, photographs, tables, buttons, hotspots, links.

Students who plan to work in this area usually have pre-existing skills or are also undertaking VET Digital Media. If this is the case, you may be excited about making use of your knowledge and skills for Media. Because of the technical expertise required, these media forms are not suitable for students who have no experience. If in doubt, reflect on your work for Outcome 2 and talk to your teacher.

Some ideas for digital and online productions

- ‘Choose your own adventure’ stories
- Corporate websites
- A social media site
- Online tutorials or instructional works
- Family records
- A website for a local club or society
- An online retail site
- Historical or educational resources
- An online fan zine
- A digital Year 12 yearbook
- A game
- An alternative school website or pages on the existing website
- An experimental work of art
- An app
- An online gallery
- A streamed video site for your class video

Convergent or hybridised media products

Scope of task: A convergent or hybridised media production that incorporates aspects of a range of media forms and is consistent with product durations and the descriptors listed.

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Production design elements relevant to convergent or hybridised media productions will be drawn from the relevant media forms outlined above.

Convergent or hybridised media productions spring from all media forms and are a wonderful way to add an extra element to a production. Think video with animation or still images, photograms, news features with online components, audio products with games or user-generated content as part of an immersive experience.

For those wishing to push the limits of portraiture, the National Portrait Gallery collects digital portraits, which are well worth considering. Follow the weblink to view them.

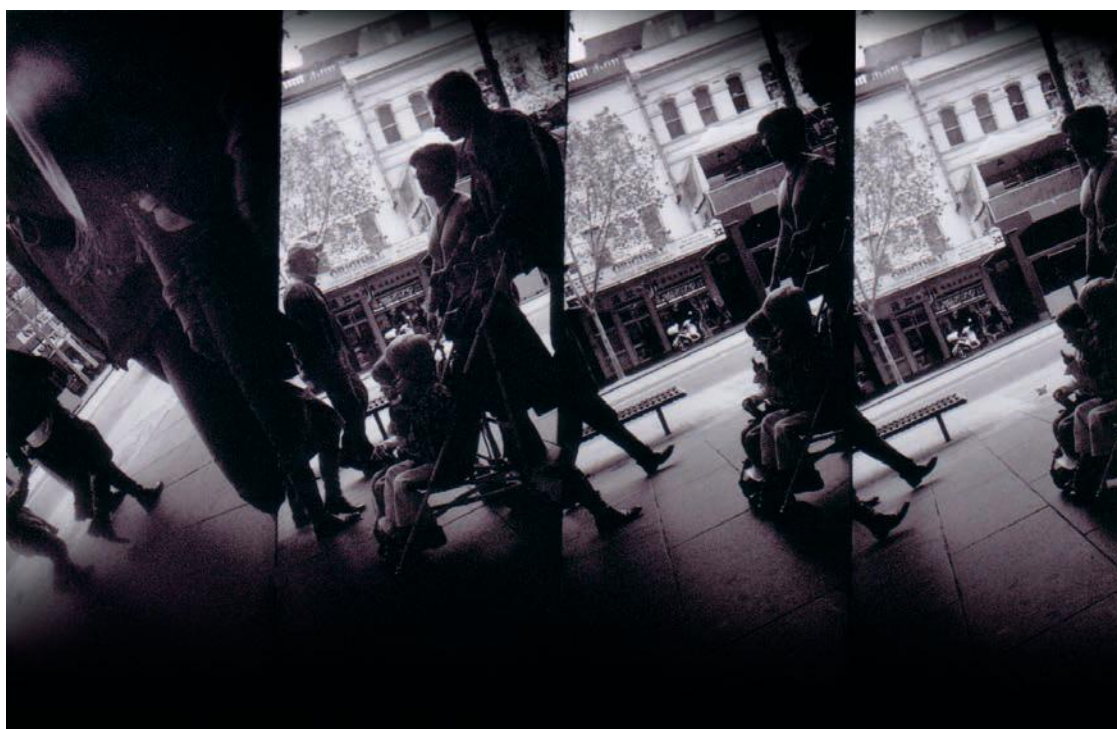
Convergent media are not necessarily digital in their consumption. In the work on the next page, Emily Milne married analogue photography with digital image management and projection. Emily used a Lomo camera to capture shots of nature and the built environment, which she then scanned and manipulated before creating timed sequences that were screened on three computers in an installation entitled *2 Seconds*. The audience standing in the middle of the installation was only able to view two computers at one time as they moved through the space. Emily’s intention was to reflect the fleeting glimpses of the world we experience every day.



Weblink



Emily Milne



Emily Milne

Figure 11.6 Analogue meets digital in Emily Milne's installation *2 Seconds*.

I've finished my production design ... when can I start production?

When your teacher has assessed your production design, given it a green light and you have both signed the VCAA Authentication Record, you may begin production. Your teacher will return your design documents so that you can use them throughout production and post-production. Annotate them as you go and be very careful not to lose them. You will resubmit your production design with your finished production. This is the best fun you will ever have in school. I wish you fine weather for your shoots, great equipment and reliable computers. Good luck.

OUTCOME 1

On completion of this unit the student should be able to produce, refine and resolve a media product designed in Unit 3.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 1.

KEY KNOWLEDGE

- production and post-production processes used to realise a media production design
- the operation of equipment, materials and technologies used in the creation of media products
- media codes and conventions relevant to the selected form, product and audience
- reflection and feedback processes to refine and resolve media products
- methods for documenting development, refinement and realisation of media products
- media language appropriate to the construction and evaluation of media representations.

KEY SKILLS

- realise a media production design through production and post-production processes
- operate equipment, materials and technologies in the production of a media product
- apply media codes and conventions relevant to the selected media form, product and audience
- use reflection and feedback to refine and resolve a media product
- document the development, refinement and resolution of a media product
- use media language relevant to the construction and evaluation of media representations.

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For this outcome, you will produce the media production you designed during Unit 3. In realising your design, you will undertake all production roles and manage each stage of the production process.

During the production process, you will undertake regular personal reflection and seek feedback from others on versions of your production. This process will help you refine your work and develop the quality of the ideas and representations expressed within it. Documenting this iterative process will demonstrate your understanding of the factors that impact on the development of your vision as you work towards the realisation of your design.

FROM VISUALISATION TO PRODUCT

The media production is the culmination of every production activity you have undertaken over the course of your time in Media. This experience, in combination with the care you lavished on your production design, means that you are well placed to realise the product you have visualised.

As you have already discovered through completing Outcomes 2 and 3 in Unit 3, media production is all about management. Organisational detail at this point will ensure that you maintain control over your vision as you move through the final pre-production stages and into production, post-production and beyond.

A production schedule

You will have completed a production timeline as part of your production design. Now that you have the go-ahead to begin production, it is time to revise and refine your production schedule. Media professionals begin at the release or exhibition date of their work and organise their production schedule backwards from there. This ensures that the vital and very time-consuming post-production stages are not rushed.

A useful technique is to plan two completion dates, the date set by your teacher and one week earlier when you will present your final rough cut or test prints to the class for feedback. This gives you one week to adjust and improve your production.

When organising a media production schedule, you need to hope for the best, plan for the worst and be aware of the limitations of the following:

- The weather: You will be working in winter. What will you do if the weather is inclement?
- The equipment: If you are sharing gear, how will you ensure fair use by everyone? What will you do if someone leaves a camera on the train?
- Your actors or talent, if you are using them: How will you manage if someone has to pull out?
- Access to facilities: How many students share the same facilities and when are these facilities available?

It is a simple fact of life that everyone leaves everything to the last minute, but for Media productions this can spell disaster. Queuing for a computer or printer is not fun. Worse still is realising that a video or photographic shoot must be repeated because your footage is inadequate or there was an unforeseen equipment failure.

If you are organised and keep to your schedule, you will not only have more time than other students, you will also have more access to your teacher and the equipment. You will also enjoy the luxury of time to correct problems and reflect about the fine details of polishing your production, while your classmates are going nuts.

Ask your teacher to organise a booking system for any shared equipment and facilities to ensure equity of access – and make sure you are first on the list.

The amount of time you should plan for will depend on a range of factors, but a very rough guide is one to two hours per mark. The SAT contributes 40 per cent of your study score for Media. Your teacher will not be able to devote this many class hours to your production, so get out your homework diary and start planning your production schedule. Be specific and realistic.



Figure 12.1 Organise with your classmates if you share facilities

Permissions and release documentation

All media productions must comply with both community standards and the law. It is important to protect yourself, your teacher and your school by ensuring that you have acted responsibly, courteously and legally.

- A talent release form should be completed by each of your actors to ensure that they not only understand the nature and purpose of your production but also the importance of their role. Such a document guarantees that they will treat your production as seriously as you do. Back this document up with a call sheet, so that everyone knows where and when they are required.
- Seek permission from those who control your locations – a letter of agreement for the use of the site is all that is required for most spaces.
- If you plan to use a public road, particularly if your production impedes the use of the road in any way, approach the local council and the police. You may need insurance or a traffic management plan.
- Store permission documentation with your production design and give a copy to your teacher before your shoot.

There are masters for all the documentation you need on NelsonNet.



Authentication

Your VCE Media SAT is an individual product for which you, and only you, are assessed. You may require the assistance of a cast and/or crew to realise your production design but must, at all times be in full creative control and operate as much of the equipment as you can. This is because your teacher must be able to authenticate your production as being entirely yours. You cannot outsource any stage or role. Editing, colour grading, sound design, image enhancement, printing, mounting and other post-production tasks must be undertaken by you. How will you demonstrate your control of every aspect of your production? Document everything in your design. You will have signed a VCAA authentication record several times already throughout the pre-production process and will continue to do so during production. If you cannot prove that the work you have undertaken is yours, your teacher will not sign the record, which could lead to a breach of VCAA rules.

Creating, using and recording your direction

As part of your production design, you were required to create instructions for any crew members you need to assist in the realisation of your production. Now is the time to revisit those instructions and to amend them to ensure that they are sufficiently detailed.

Make a copy of the relevant pages of your production design for each member of your crew and mark up the storyboards or photographic mock-ups with instructions for camera operators, sound or lighting crew. If you don't already have one, create a shot list in the order in which your production will be shot. Use this to create diagrams of shot blocking, lighting and camera locations. While on the shoot, write notes or record a voice memo of improvised directions as you go. After the shoot, collect these documents and store them with your production design as evidence of your direction.

What if you want to appear in your own production?

Some students plan to appear in their production, either as a star or in a bit-part role. If this is the case, document how you will achieve this in your production design. In most cases, it is too difficult to take a starring role – you must operate the camera. Cameo appearances are manageable and are a bit of a tradition among Hollywood directors, including Hitchcock and Tarantino. Students planning to appear in their own production should seek advice from their teacher.

If you do want to appear in your production, use the techniques outlined above to direct someone to operate the camera for the time you are in front of it. When on set, make notes about ad hoc changes to your design as they arise. All decisions about camera must be made by you. If you are using a two-camera set-up, you will need to position both, operate the main camera and give the second camera operator strict direction.

Appropriation

Two types of appropriation occasionally appear in student productions. Both require copyright clearance. The first is deliberate. The student has chosen to use the work of third parties, such as

songs, lines from a play, images or logos. If you decide to do this, see pages 31 and 46 in Chapter 2 for the process and the pitfalls.

The other type of appropriation is inadvertent. You may not be aware that you have to seek copyright clearance for images and sounds that unintentionally appear on or can be heard in the background of a shot. That is one reason why so few characters in film and television watch TV. Think about it, many lounge rooms in TV land don't even have a television. Producers don't want you to think that the characters are a bit odd for never having the TV on, so they don't include one in the set design.

Inadvertent appropriation makes life difficult. It messes with your sound and means that you are unable to screen your work anywhere other than your classroom, including online or in festivals. Achieving clearance for inadvertent appropriation is all but impossible. When filming in public, avoid locations where there is music. If you must show a screen, then you should create some original material to appear on the screen. The easiest way forward, though, is to emulate TV land, where no-one watches the box and computer screens are tilted away from the audience.

WHAT ARE THE FEATURES OF A SUCCESSFUL MEDIA PRODUCTION?

The assessment criteria for Media are published by the VCAA annually. Check that you have a copy of the current criteria – they may change from year to year. What will not change are those features of a media production that underpin the criteria with which your work will be assessed. These include the management of the process and the production of a quality product that has clearly been developed from the production design.

The production process is evident in every aspect of a successful media production. Thoughtful control will provide great material for successful post-production. What can students do to ensure that they get the best out of production?

Audiovisual and photographic pre-shoot planning

Use the documents that you created in your production design, such as the screenplay, storyboards, image designs and shot list, to create lists of equipment, costumes, props, make-up and anything else you will need at least a week before each shoot. Check out your locations and create shot blocking diagrams. Follow the weblink for tips. Revisit your design several times; you are sure to have forgotten something. Organise your shot list by estimating the time required for each set-up and take. Add some wiggle room.

Give your cast and crew call sheets at least a week before the shoot. Go through the call sheet with them. Little details like this make your production seem important. Your cast and crew are less likely to 'forget' if you demonstrate your organisational skills.

The filmmaker's got to make it his story and the actors have got to make it their story.

Rachel Griffiths, actor and director



Weblink

Billie Calwell



Figure 12.2 Billie Calwell used her knowledge of her subject on the shoot.

Call your cast and crew the day before the shoot and again on the morning of the shoot. Don't text or DM, speak to them. This demonstrates the importance of their contribution.

Charge batteries and check equipment the night before the shoot. Format SD cards and check camera settings.

Use your family ... and credit them

Professional media producers have drivers. Why not ask your parents to take you to your locations for a quick pre-shoot recce, pick up actors and move equipment? While on location, professionals also have caterers. Ask someone in your family to organise feeding your cast and crew. It is amazing what a little food will do when you are outside on a cold winter's day and your mates are cranky. Don't forget to thank your helpers in the credits.

On location

Principal photography – breathe and take your time

Shooting can be stressful, which results in too many student productions suffering because the camera operator, sound recordist or talent rush the beginning or end of a shot. If you are working in video, use a production slate and count your actors in and out of every take. If you are not sure, go for another take, and then another. You will have hours in the edit suite – what are a few seconds in production? Don't have a production slate? There's an app for that! Or you can make one.

Always use headphones that record what is going onto the memory card. Do not rely on your ear; you need to control sound on set. Tips and tricks on recording sound can be found on NelsonNet.

The biggest mistake in student films is that they are usually cast so badly, with friends and people the directors know. Actually you can cover a lot of bad direction with good acting.

Brian De Palma, film director

PRACTICAL TIP

Simple, clear and consistent instructions not only help your cast and crew, but you too, because everyone knows who is in control. Here is a useful script:

*Positions, everyone.
Stand by, we will be going in 30 seconds.
Quiet on set.*

*Camera rolling.
Scene X, Take X.
Ready in 3 ... 2 ... 1 ...
Action!*

*3 ... 2 ... 1 ... cut!
Thank you, everyone.*

Control the shoot

You have spent a great deal of time designing your shots; be prepared to spend a little more on the shoot to make sure that you achieve your vision. Be calm, then everyone else will respond as you want.

There are many things to keep in mind as you organise your equipment, cast and crew. Make it a rule to pause before every shot, breathe and ask yourself: Is this shot composed as I planned it? You know the rules of image construction, but when you also have to manage everything from the weather to the moods of your production team, it is easy to become flustered and settle for near enough. Don't give in to this temptation. Near enough is not good enough. Take some time, move the camera a few centimetres or wait until the sun comes out from behind the clouds. Always shoot multiple shots or takes of each camera set-up. Your production is worth it.



Figure 12.3 Check and recheck the accuracy of your focus and depth of field.

The central act of photography, the act of choosing and eliminating, forces a concentration on the picture edge – the line that separates in from out – and on the shapes that are created by it.

John Szarkowski, photographer

Photography is about the F's

- *Find* the right shot. Take your time. Think.
- *Frame* the shot. Again, take your time. Reflect on what is in the shot and what is not. Study the frame and everything in it. Try a frame within a frame. Be aware of objects or framing that detract or distract from your vision, such as bins or plants apparently growing out of characters' heads. Reframe and start again.
- *Focus*. Select an aperture that accurately selects that part of the image you want in focus. Take your time, breathe and press the shutter. Change the aperture, focus again and shoot. Repeat.

Photographers have the supreme ability to control time during their shoot, which can be a real balancing act. Photographs may display the evidence of a rushed shot; or, conversely, by holding talent in a pose for too long, the sense of spontaneity or comfort in front of the camera can be lost. Sometimes student photographers imagine that every shot is a winner and that what they see through the lens is what will appear on the image. It won't. Our eyes and brains collude to put the best spin on our shots; what we imagine is often not what we find when the shoot is over.

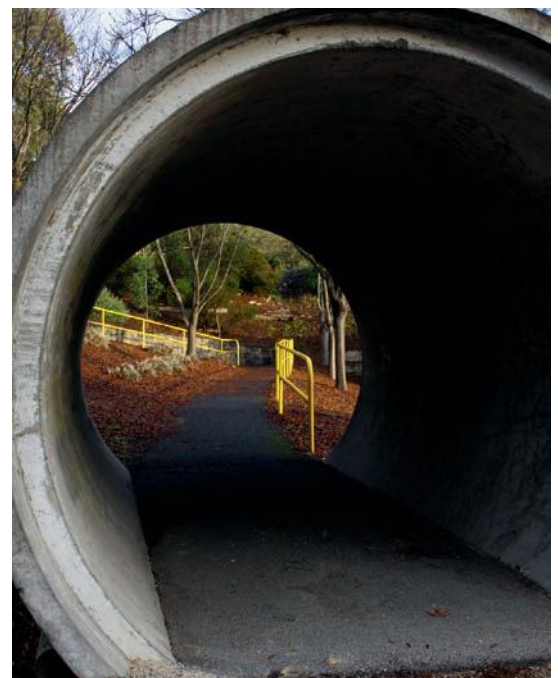


Figure 12.4 A frame within a frame is a beautiful technique to use.

Some photographs are designed to appear spontaneous. Images that look spontaneous are the result of hours research and practice. If you are going for a spontaneous look, undertake several trial runs on location to perfect the technique of shooting instinctively.

Light

All students working in visual media must control light; if you don't, it will control your production. Plan your shoots so that you can maintain continuity in your lighting. If possible, shoot everything in one location on one day. Try to minimise situations where there is strong or direct natural light, as it throws strong shadows. If the weather is changeable, as it often is during winter, you are likely to experience continuity problems that cannot be compensated for in post-production. Use artificial lights and a reflector (a couple of styrofoam boxes taped together will do), and choose sheltered locations.

Indoors, use sheets to diffuse strong light and consider moving lights to create the effect you are looking for.

Light and expose shots for the subject, which, in most images, should be the brightest object in the image. If the subject is a person, then light for the eyes to capture the viewer's attention; audiences always look at the eyes.

Overexposure and underexposure should be avoided if possible. Both have issues when an image is edited. Overexposure, where part of the image is blown out, means that there is no information in the image to work with. Underexposure results in deep shadows with little detail and artifacts or noise marring the image. Try exposure bracketing.

Know when to wait for the light

The difference between a happy snapper and a photographer is the discipline of knowing when to wait for the light.

Iconic US photographer Ansel Adams worked mostly at dawn and dusk because of the quality of the light at these times: 'The silver light turned every blade of grass and every particle of sand into a luminous metallic splendour ...' These times of day are called 'golden hour' or 'magic hour' in cinematography because the light is warmer and softer than when the sun is higher in the sky.



Katherine Ryder

Figure 12.5 Know when to wait for the light.
Image: Katherine Ryder.

Is it really there, or is it in my head?

Consider the following illustration of the importance of pace:

'What's the most important thing about comedy timing?'

'What's the most important thing about comedy? [beat] Timing!'

A problem common to all media productions stems, ironically, from the intensity with which Media students become so intimately involved with their productions – they fail to see or hear what is actually on the screen or in the soundtrack. Students spend hours poring over their screens but miss a spelling error in a title or an ugly bin in a shot. They have been concentrating so hard on the key element that they fail to see the proverbial elephant in the room. Even professionals fall into the trap of believing that their audience will 'get it' because they get it. The media world is littered with failures because the audience didn't get it.

Edit for pace and space

As a media creator, you know every shot and every sound, however brief or soft – you wrote, directed, shot and edited them. You also know what is to come next; remember that your audience doesn't. Be careful to give your audience the opportunity to discover your ideas at a pace that allows them to think. You may need to slow the pace a little to allow your audience time to contextualise what they have seen, read or heard so they know how to digest what is to come. If you are unsure, show a test audience.

Critical friends

Use a system of 'critical friends' to comment on your work in post-production. These 'friends' should not be involved in your production, and need to be honest enough to tell you that what you imagine you are communicating is clearly in your work. The Year 11 Media class make excellent critical friends.

Show segments of your production to your critical friends at several stages during post-production. Seek feedback, ask questions, write notes about their observations and how you can make changes to improve your work based on these suggestions. It is not their role to tell you what to do, but to critique what you have done so that you can make adjustments and improvements. You may not enjoy what you hear, but your work will be better for it.

Individuality and distinctiveness

Individuality and distinctiveness come in many guises. An original idea or an excellent example of an existing idea or text form can be individual and distinctive. Many students, for example, choose to create photographic series on themes such as nature or the human form. A popular subject for multimedia productions is a corporate web page. Videographers often create stories about love, loss and life's journeys. Artists, filmmakers and media professionals the world over struggle for individuality using similar concepts and techniques. How does one achieve individuality if an idea has been done many times before?

The dislocation of youth in society is a common theme. Creating an individual and distinctively original rendering of a subject that can easily become clichéd is tricky. In the image below, Greg Fiske applied a range of familiar codes and conventions when framing his subject and constructing the image. The subject is recognisable, yet distanced from the audience through the layering of effects and the insertion of fine veins on the face. This asks the audience to consider the nature of reality. Greg's image achieved his intention to convey his subject as isolated, grungy, alone, yet strangely haunting.

Individuality and distinctiveness do not necessarily mean that an idea must be original; after all, how many music video clips or women's magazines are entirely original today? The aim is not necessarily to come up with an idea or form that is entirely new, but to demonstrate your individuality and distinctiveness through one of the following:

- an original concept
- a unique spin, approach or twist on an idea that has been done before
- an excellent rendition, remake or example of an idea, style, genre or media form.

Thus a media production based on an idea that has been tried before will be assessed as a newly conceived and executed example of a text that can be read within the context and history of its medium.



Figure 12.6 Greg Fiske applied a range of familiar codes and conventions when framing his subject and constructing an image.

Greg Fiske



You can borrow ideas and techniques from other media. Professionals do it all the time; indeed, some have made a career out of appropriation – they call it **homage**, and audiences love the unique piecing together of ideas from different sources and recognising the in-jokes in a media text. There is, however, a fine line between homage and rip-off. Tread this line carefully, and you will delight your audience; step too far over the line, and they won't be laughing with you, but at you.

Cohesiveness and consistency

The key to a successful production is consistency. Does your work hang together as a cohesive whole, or does a shot, a scene or a page let it down? Your production should be technically and conceptually consistent from start to finish, with each element of construction clearly contributing to the communication of your concept. Most students have some areas of production expertise in which they excel, and others in which they are not so strong. The trick is to concentrate on achieving a quality product, rather than hoping your strengths will compensate for any lapses.

For audiovisual, photographic, print and multimedia productions, it is important to match colour, sound, tone and style between shots, scenes or pages. This can be achieved by perfecting the look for one page, shot or scene, and then matching everything else to the standard you set.

Continuity is the key.

Sound

Audiovisual producers should pay particular attention to their soundtrack. In post-production, equalise the sound from shot to shot and balance your sound FX and music tracks to contribute to rather than stand out from your production. Play rough cuts on a big screen with speakers. It is amazing how different sound can be when you are not listening through earbuds or headphones. Ask your teacher and classmates for their opinion. If your audience notices your soundtrack for the wrong reasons, they are unlikely to react favourably to your vision.

Photography and print

Digital photographers and print specialists should try to use the same computer every time they sit down to work; you will get used to the calibration of the screen and it will be easier to know when you have accurately matched colour and tone. Complete one image or page, print it using the paper stock you have selected for your production with the printer you will use, finetune the image and print it again. When you are satisfied, use this image to help you understand the differences between the screen and the print. Complete your production using the test image to calibrate your adjustments. Print your entire production in one session.

Skill in the use of equipment, applications and processes

Your skill in the use of equipment, applications and processes will be evident in all aspects of your production. Again, it is consistency that will best demonstrate the breadth of your skill. One of the best aids to consistency is the proper allocation of time to each stage and role in your production. Make your timeline work for you.

Your skill will, in most cases, be judged mainly on the apparent ease with which equipment, applications and processes have been used in your production. Skill is demonstrated through both the special techniques you employ and, more importantly, your consistent control of equipment, application or process. Such skill will be apparent to your teacher and media professionals, but will be invisible to those unfamiliar with the construction of media products.

Skilful media practitioners make it look easy, seamless, the way it is 'supposed' to be. Most media techniques will not draw attention to themselves. Editing, for example, will go largely unnoticed by a general audience, who will be unaware of the skill required to convey story elements through the selection and ordering of images using pace and rhythm alone. Images will be judged by a general audience as successful or not; they are unlikely to unpack their judgements in the same way as a professional photographer who would look for composition, processing and manipulation skills evident through such elements as tone, colour and presentation.

Management and organisation of the production process

It is a sad fact of life that you cannot blame any deficiencies in your production on poor or inadequate equipment. You will be assessed not on the equipment you have, but on how you use it.

Students working in digital formats – including video, digital photography, multimedia and print – must be aware of the limitations of their computer hardware and software. Careful file management and retaining control over the location and size of files will allow the production to run more smoothly. Keep everything, including every image and video file, developmental versions, video and print projects, on memory cards and backed up on an external hard drive, just in case.

Your work will demonstrate your management and organisation. It is clear from their production if a student has worked from a well-conceived production design – management of the production phase is apparent from the finished production as a whole and from its individual parts. No amount of post-production polishing can disguise an unmanaged shoot. Glitches in the movements of characters, continuity issues, variations in the tonal value of one or more images, pixelation of digital images or text and sloppy mounting reveal a lack of expertise that is compounded by poor time management in the production or post-production stages.

From production design to the production

It is easy to demonstrate the relationship between your design and your production. In most cases, your assessor will look at your design first and then assess your product. They should be able to see your design in your product and vice versa.

This is not to say that your design and product will be mirror images of one another. A lot of learning happens between June and the submission of your media production; this learning should be evident in the way you have used your design to make your product. The realisation of your design will demonstrate the development of your production skills and knowledge about the media form in which you are working.

Using your production design

A dog-eared production design is a good production design. When it comes to the resubmission of your design in Semester 2, there is no criterion for neatness. What may have been a pristine document in June should definitely show the wear and tear of the process by the time your production is completed. Be proud of that muddy footprint, the scribbled notes in the margin, the pages of notes added during the process and the coffee stains over the screenplay. These are signs that your design has fulfilled its function; it has been the working document it was intended to be.

Use your production design in rehearsal, on the shoot and in post-production. If you are using talent or a crew in your production, this document is the symbol of your ownership and control. Your cast and crew will want to offer all manner of advice, some of it good, most of it bad. Listen to it all, and if it is worthwhile and you want to use it, then amend your design. If the advice is bad, wave your design documents in the air as a talisman, tell your well-meaning advisers that if it isn't in the production design it isn't in the product, and get on with the realisation of your vision.

Reflection, refinement and resolution

Take time at the end of each day of production and post-production to reflect on your work and record how your concept is progressing. Pay special attention to the refinements you make. After a long day working on one image or shot, it may not seem that you have achieved much, but a formal reflective process will help you see the big picture in the refinement of your media product.

Reflection begins with your production design and is evident through the notes and annotations you make throughout the production process. Keep a diary or a dated log entry for each decision you make and the reasons for it. Write all over your design and attach written documentation of your decisions. It is a good sign when your production design reflects the developing sophistication of your concept. You will be assessed on the records of refinement made as you work, so keep all of them.



Figure 12.7 Create a system for recording feedback.

Media production is an iterative process

Your teacher will schedule regular screenings or viewings of draft productions and rough cuts. Although these occasions can be challenging, they are designed for you to receive feedback from your peers and from your teacher with a view to making the next iteration better.

Use a series of prompts to structure feedback sessions. For each draft production, everyone in the class should write brief notes using the following headings:

- Something that is working well
 - Something that is not working well at this stage
 - The most important thing you can do to improve your production – and as the deadline looms, add another prompt
 - Something that you can do in the next week to make your production fabulous.
- Collect all the sticky notes, reflect and use the advice to refine your production.

A final checklist for submission

The requirements for submitting productions will vary slightly from school to school. Ask your teacher about how you are required to submit your work.

The care with which you present your production is reflected in the little things. If you are working in video, have you watched your video production on another screen or television after exporting it to ensure there are no glitches? Are the titles clear and well-positioned on a TV screen, as well as on the computer screen? Is your DVD or USB flash drive clearly labelled? Photography and print students should ask themselves, does every print demonstrate control over all aspects of the printing process? Is your photographic sequence carefully mounted? Attention to detail at this stage of the process can make or break a production.

Finally, remember to smile! This is the hardest thing you will ever do in school. Luckily it is also the best! Enjoy!

Make them laugh or make them cry, but above all make them care!

PRACTICAL TIP

Plan some wiggle room for the week before your production is due. Professionals call this 'frig up' time, and it allows you to resolve any disasters or equipment failures and polish your work without panic.

Mietta Manning



Figure 12.8 After all the hard work, you should be proud of your work.

OUTCOME 2

On completion of this unit the student should be able to discuss issues of agency and control in the relationship between the media and its audience.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 2.

KEY KNOWLEDGE

- the dynamic and changing relationship between the media and its audience
- the influence of both the media and audience
- the way media is used by globalised media institutions, governments and the individual
- the rationale for regulating the relationships between the media and its audience in Australia
- the issues and challenges relating to regulation and control of the media
- ethical and legal issues in the production, distribution, consumption and reception of media products
- media language.

KEY SKILLS

- discuss the dynamic and changing relationship between the media and its audience
- discuss the extent of the influence of the media and media audience
- analyse the regulation of relationships between the media and its audience in Australia
- analyse issues and challenges relating to regulation and control of the media
- evaluate ethical and legal issues in the media
- use media language.

Area of Study Outcomes, Key Knowledge and Key Skills points are reproduced by permission from the VCE Media Study Design (2018–2022), © VCAA.

Now we have so many more social outlets, so many ways to be stalked and bullied. If social media is too much for you to handle, then don't have a Twitter or Facebook account. Just be yourself. Be who you want to be.

Khloe Kardashian

Whoever controls the media, the images, controls the culture.

Allen Ginsberg, poet

WE LOVE THE MEDIA, BUT WE DON'T TRUST IT

Why is it that after all this time and all the pleasure the media has given us for more than a century, we still don't trust it? There is something in our cultural beliefs that tells us that pleasure must come at a cost and because so much of our media appears to be free, our suspicion is heightened. The deal seems too good to be true; there must be a catch. But what if I told you that, right from the beginning of the mass media, consumers and commentators have always held the same conflicting views? There is even a term for it: cognitive dissonance, the ability to hold two or more contradictory points of view at the same time.

Part of our mistrust is because we love our media. We are always willing to suspend disbelief and go on the journey with the media, knowing that media products and texts are designed to change us – to make us laugh or cry, to teach or enrage us, to provoke or comfort. Whatever its effect, the media engages audiences. We willingly give ourselves to the media's wonders, caring little about what it extracts from us as payment. But deep down, even as we are glued to a screen with our hearts pounding or tears of joy running down our faces, there is a little part of us that says, hang on, what is really happening here? How and why did I get in such a state?

In this area of study we learn to balance our fears with our engagement. There will be no easy answers and very few correct ones. It is all about examining the often contradictory claims and evidence about the relationship between the media and its audiences, evaluating points of view, researching the **stakeholders** and recognising that there are strengths and flaws in every argument. And, after two years of studying the media, this is how it should be. After all, if we knew all the answers there would be no need for VCE Media.

Everything you have studied during Media over the past two years will inform this area of study and you will find yourself referring to earlier chapters with a new focus. In Chapter 8 you learnt that since the beginning of the media every new media form has resulted in a **moral panic**. Or as Professor Janet Murray from Georgia Institute of Technology put it: 'New media is always distrusted media.' The history of media moral panics on page 180 is a good place to start thinking about the dynamic and changing relationship between the media and its audiences. A quick skim through Chapter 8 will help you discuss the relationship between the media and contemporary audiences.

OMG! Everyone is influenced by the media!

The media influences us, every one of us. Full stop. Get over it. Some people claim otherwise, but who hasn't at some time in their lives been scared of a creaking door or a new flesh-eating virus, craved a burger or clicked when they know they shouldn't? Even our everyday language is influenced by the media. Drink and drive? You're a bloody idiot! Yes, the media does influence us ... but I'm loving it ... LOL ... probably because I'm worth it! (See what I did there?)

The greatest problem when discussing the relationship between the media and its audiences lies in defining the discussion. What do we mean by the term 'relationship'? Are there different types of relationships? Which media are we talking about? Just like a current affairs program, we tend to simplify, generalise and edit complex discussions into two-minute segments with appropriate sound bites. And like current affairs programs, discussions about media influence invariably focus on the bad stuff. Why? Doesn't anybody remember the good things the media makes us do and think and feel?



In a Relationship
with the media

Forever

Figure 13.1

Everyone is in some
kind of relationship
with the media.

WHAT IS AGENCY AND CONTROL?

This area of study is called 'agency and control' because it analyses the power and influence the media is claimed to have over audiences, and that audiences are claimed to have over the media. Our experience makes it clear that the media does not have absolute power to influence audiences. We do not do everything the media suggests. On the other hand, audiences can and do exert power over the media, but the extent of their power is not always easy to determine.

This much is known: the media needs audiences and audiences need the media. The question that media theorists have tried to answer for over 100 years is how and under what circumstances do they influence each other? These days we understand that the relationship between the media and its audiences is based on two concepts: agency and control, but what does this mean?.

Agency

Agency is a term used to describe the ability to act independently and make choices in life. In theory, all humans have agency over their lives; they can think or do whatever they choose. In reality, however, human agency is limited by the structures, rules and values of the society in which we live. By living in society, we generally agree with these limitations; they protect us and our way of life. For example, most Australians agree that we should be free to consume whatever media we like but that children are sometimes too young to exercise their agency and should be protected from media content that may harm them. As media audiences, we exercise agency and control over our media consumption every day.

Control

When referring to the media, the term **control** includes all those actions undertaken by media industries and organisations, governments, stakeholders and individuals that structure media content, availability and consumption. These include controls instituted by governments, the media industry in Australia and overseas, financial and organisational decisions made by media corporations that impact on consumer choice and the actions of consumers and stakeholder organisations.

Media companies in Australia and worldwide are mostly privately owned. The key driver for all their decision making is to make a profit for their shareholders. This means that the production and distribution of content is always done with the financial bottom line in mind. Controls over the distribution of media content, such as geoblocking streamed television content, Blu-ray and DVD region zoning, the decision to release content such as a game, film or news item only in certain locations, or variable pricing for content, products and apps across the world, are all financial decisions designed to maximise profit.

Media control may be also the result of government legislation about media ownership, classification and content, such as **crossmedia ownership** laws preventing one media organisation owning too many media outlets in one location, the classification of films, games and some literature by the Classification Board, Australian content rules for television, or little-known laws such as the Spam Act, which prevents the spreading of unwanted advertising via phone or the internet. Government control is based on the need to both support and regulate the media industry, and to advise and protect media consumers.

Control of media content may also be due to industry self-regulation. While government laws control some media industries such as television, radio and the internet, the rules and regulations are administered by the industries themselves through industry codes of practice. For example, the Broadcasting Services Act specifies a minimum number of hours of Australian content on television. Free TV and ASTRA represent the free-to-air and subscription television industries and administer the law on behalf of its members. They also advocate to the government and audiences on issues related to the industry.

Some media industries such as advertising, journalism and newspapers are not subject to government content laws. For these industries, self-regulatory organisations such as the Advertising Standards Board, the Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance and the Press Council administer their codes of conduct. For example, the advertising industry abides by a number of voluntary codes of practice administered by the Advertising Standards Board. If a consumer has a complaint about an ad, the board conducts an investigation and makes a ruling. For more on these organisations, see pages 388 and 395.



Control of media content may also arise as the result of the work of stakeholder organisations. These organisations include the industry bodies mentioned above, but also others such as the Interactive Games and Entertainment Association (IGEA), the Australian Children's Television Foundation and the Australian Council on Children and the Media. Stakeholder organisations advocate for their industry, advise and lobby governments and provide advice to consumers.

Of course, media audiences also exert personal control over the media they consume. Such control may take the form of choosing not to watch a particular film or television program because of fears it may distress themselves or those in the room, not supporting particular media organisations because of its political or social stance, not engaging in social media or choosing not to consume illegally downloaded content. Personal control is usually exercised as a result of a person's political, social or religious values and beliefs.

Agency and control: chicken and egg?

One of society's favourite discussion topics is the power of the media. There is no denying that the media is powerful, but what about the power of the audience? After all, without the audience there is no media. It is true that both the audience and the media have agency and control. The issue for Media students is determining how, under what conditions and to what degree agency and control are successfully applied by audiences and the media.

Media audience members think of the media in terms of themselves

Individual media consumers usually think about their media use in relation to themselves. They think about what they consume and like. Few of us think of ourselves in wider terms as economic, social and cultural participants in media consumption or production. This is because we think of the media as simply an everyday part of our lives. Something that has always been there. Try it now. What is your earliest memory? Does it involve the media? Do you have a photograph or video to support this memory? If so, is it the photograph or the event you remember? Now think about how your childhood memories have been recorded and how these memories and the recordings have become intertwined. The relationship between ourselves and the media has always been complex.

The media as a socialising force

The media no longer mediates reality for its audiences; it is so ubiquitous that society can be considered mediated – that is, 'saturated with media communication' (Andreas Hepp, *Cultures of Mediatization*, 2013). What are the implications for agency and control when the media doesn't just provide news and commentary but has become so powerful that it not only influences but moulds every aspect of society, including politics?

These days, when we think of ourselves and the media, we think about our relationship with our friends on Facebook and Instagram or we think of ourselves as audience members choosing and engaging with a film, television program, app or site. We think of ourselves as individuals, perhaps as a gamer or as a reader of a magazine or newspaper or as a listener to music or a podcast. If we think about it at all, we tend to see media as a free or paid service that benefits our lives. We rarely stop to think what it means to be one of nearly 2 billion Facebook users or one of the millions of *Star Wars* fans across the world. We think that we have complete agency over our media experiences, but do we?

What does it mean to exercise agency in a media-saturated world?

This area of study is about the balance between agency and control. How much agency can individuals and audiences have in a world that is so saturated by the media that actions and even thoughts are structured by and within the media?

Mediation is the process by which reality is shaped through the ways it is reconstructed by media creators and institutions into representations in media texts. Mediation is about our perceptions of the world being mediated by the media.

Here is an example of everyday mediation. You are watching a television news item about a puppy rescued from a house fire. As you watch, you subconsciously decode the representation of this event and understand that it is constructed by the news crew and the editor to position you as the audience to be sympathetic to the puppy and grateful for the work of the firefighters. You know that the event has been mediated to suggest this response, but you continue to watch, even though you have seen hundreds of news items with exactly this storyline. You like puppies and good news stories. By continuing to watch, you will be exposed to advertising, which you also know is the price you pay for news.

Mediatisation is a theory that takes mediation one step further and argues that the media shapes the processes of communication, framing discourses as well as the society in which that communication takes place. Mediatisation sees our world, including our perceptions of it, being formed by and through the media. Mediatisation holds that it is not possible to differentiate the media from life.

Here is an example of mediatisation. You watch a news item about a celebrity at an event. The item is structured in the same way as the puppy story: it's a feel-good story. You read the item as news, not knowing that the event was created and paid for by several companies who also pay the celebrity to promote their clothing, cars, make-up, holidays, whatever. You like what the celebrity is wearing, so you jump onto their Instagram feed and make a comment, which in turn adds to their influence, enabling them to charge more for being seen using certain products. While you are there, you notice that the celebrity is eating yoghurt and the next time you buy yoghurt you try this brand and post a pic in your feed about how yummy it is. Your friends like the pic and so the world of mediatisation grows. Sometimes you are aware of your role in this world, sometimes not.

The gap between the media world and the social world is shrinking as culture and society become more thoroughly mediatised.

Professor Graeme Turner, University of Queensland

Activity 13.1 Mediation, mediatisation and me

- 1 Think about your relationship with the media and write about one example where the media you consume has been mediated. Which organisation was responsible? How was the mediation constructed? How did it make you feel?
- 2 Now think of an example where your media experience was part of the mediatisation process. Which organisations were responsible? Outline the extent of the mediatisation. How aware of the process were you at the time?

Issues in discussing agency and control

The question of whether or not the media influences individuals and society is not open for discussion – of course it does. What we need to determine is how, why, and under what circumstances such influence occurs. Most importantly, we need to determine the extent of this influence and how much agency audiences can exercise under the weight of a media that is so pervasive in our lives.

While it is clear that the media influences audiences differently at different times, what is less well understood are the mechanisms that allow influence on some occasions but not on others. To understand this, we need to examine the role of:

- media history
- media systems and processes
- media organisations
- media forms and texts



Figure 13.2 Studying agency and control, it can sometimes be difficult to determine cause and effect.

Getty Images/Derrick Diemont

- audiences
- the contexts of media consumption and use
- media research
- the law
- society's values.

Each of the above pieces of the agency and control puzzle can be studied alone, but more often we analyse them in relation to one another.

In the course of this analysis, you will discuss topics as diverse as morality and control over one's actions, the role of business in the media, education, propaganda, the difference between children and adults, good and evil, work and leisure, the future and, of course, the media itself.

Discussion about the power of the media began over 100 years ago, at a time when mass-communication media technologies were new and, like all new communication technologies before them, were considered suspicious. Community understanding about the relationship between the media and its audience was basic, even simplistic, by today's standards. It was assumed that the meaning of a text was determined by its producer. These meanings were thought to be fixed, and the media was therefore considered to be very powerful because audiences were all assumed to read the same message from any media text.

Today's discussions are multifaceted, reflecting not only the increased sophistication of the media itself, but also the complexity of the relationships between the media and its audiences. Theorists speak not of one mass audience, but of multiple audiences, each of which has the agency to negotiate meaning in their texts and who – like the media they are consuming – operate within a complex social, financial and regulatory media world.

The media is about communication, and communication is about relationships

We live in both a mass media and multi-mediated world. We still consume media made for mass audiences, as has been the case since the first media. Who doesn't love the latest blockbuster or binge watch? But we also receive these texts and commentary about them from a range of sources. It is rare today for audiences to engage with a media text without already knowing what many fans and commentators think.

For the media to influence its audiences, it must communicate with them. But what is communication? Professor Celeste Condit of the University of Georgia suggests that communication is not something that happens to audiences, but is a relational process. Condit believes that communication is not about transferring, disseminating or circulating information, but is about the relationships between participants in the communication process. These relationships determine not what audiences see and hear, but more importantly how they interpret content. For Condit, communication is situated within social, political and cultural networks, which explains why audiences hear and read media messages differently.

Communication is the relational process of creating and interpreting messages that elicit a response.

Em Griffin, Emeritus Professor of Communication, Wheaton College, Illinois

Understanding how the media works depends on your world view, and your world view depends on your history

That the media is pervasive and powerful in society is a given; what this means for its role, rights and responsibilities is open to discussion. Before we can examine the relationship between the media and its audiences, we need to understand that arguments and evidence about this relationship arise out of one or more of three different ways of thinking about the role of the media in society.

- The political economy model holds that the media is simply part of an economic system where power and control reside in political and economic institutions. Under this model, the media transmits the messages these institutions determine.

- The effects model holds that media forms and content have strong effects on individuals and society. This model sees media forms and texts as powerful agents of change, and not always for the better.
- The cultural model holds that it is culture – which includes the political economy and the media – that explains the individual's relationship with the media. The media serves as the communicative space within which cultures and other forces in society can interact.

The primary question about the relationship between the media, society and the individual has always been: who has more power, the audience or the media? The answer depends on the social and political world view of the person asking the question. Our understanding of human communication and the ways in which the media might influence individuals, communities and society is – and always has been – inescapably linked to our history and values.

In America, media theorists tend to be informed by the effects model and by the American belief in capitalism as expressed in democratic and economic freedom. Thus, in America, media theory has two apparently contradictory sides: the media is assumed to influence individuals and the community, often in negative ways; yet the right for media producers to make and market their products is bound up in the belief of freedom of expression. Media violence, for example, might be considered a bad influence, but producers have the right to make it and audiences the right to consume it.

The British and European experience is quite different. In the United Kingdom, media theory and research developed from a Marxist and community service understanding of the role of media in society. Marxist theory is critical of capitalist media, which it believes serves the interests of media owners, not the audience. This is sometimes called the political economy model. The public service view is that the media should serve the needs of the community, which is evident in the long history of the BBC. Thus, even though it is recognised that the media may adversely influence its audiences, this influence is balanced by an understanding of its ideological place within society. Media commentary in the United Kingdom and Europe tends to analyse the media in both commercial and ideological terms.

In Australia, we draw our understanding of the role of the media from both the American and British approaches.

Thinking about media influence can be challenging

How can we think about agency and control when our very thinking is mediated – shaped by the media we are thinking about? This has been a topic that has interested media theorists since early last century. Over time, increasingly sophisticated theories have been devised in an attempt to explain the relationship between the media and its audiences. Each theory has some relevance but all have limitations because, as you have already discovered, our relationship with the media – both individually and as a society – is, as Facebook would put it, complicated.

This can sometimes make the communication process difficult to comprehend, which is why theories and models can be useful.

Communication theories encourage us to step away from our everyday experience of the media and to think about them from a critical distance.

A word of warning! Some of the theories you will learn about are deceptively simple, especially the earlier ones. As the media has become more sophisticated, so has media theory. Try to resist the easy appeal of earlier explanations of media influence. They serve only as a history lesson designed to teach you about how limited media theory was in the beginning. They are certainly not helpful in explaining our current relationship with the media in a time when media technologies pervade every aspect of our lives. Would you take the advice of a doctor whose training ended in the 20th century?

A critical eye is critical

Communication theories have limits, and because they are theoretical they often prove to be erroneous in practice. In an attempt to capture a snapshot of media communication, they can oversimplify the process and even lead to confusion between the theory and the process it describes.

As Media students, you should keep this in mind as you move through your study of media agency and control. Maintain a critical eye and test all theories against real-life examples, which will point to the strengths and weaknesses of each. Remember, if we really did understand how the media influences audiences, this area of study would be redundant.

COMMUNICATION THEORIES AND MODELS

Communication theories and models are an attempt to make sense of complex processes. The terms 'communication theory' and **communication model** are often used interchangeably, so don't worry about the difference.

A brief history of research into media effects

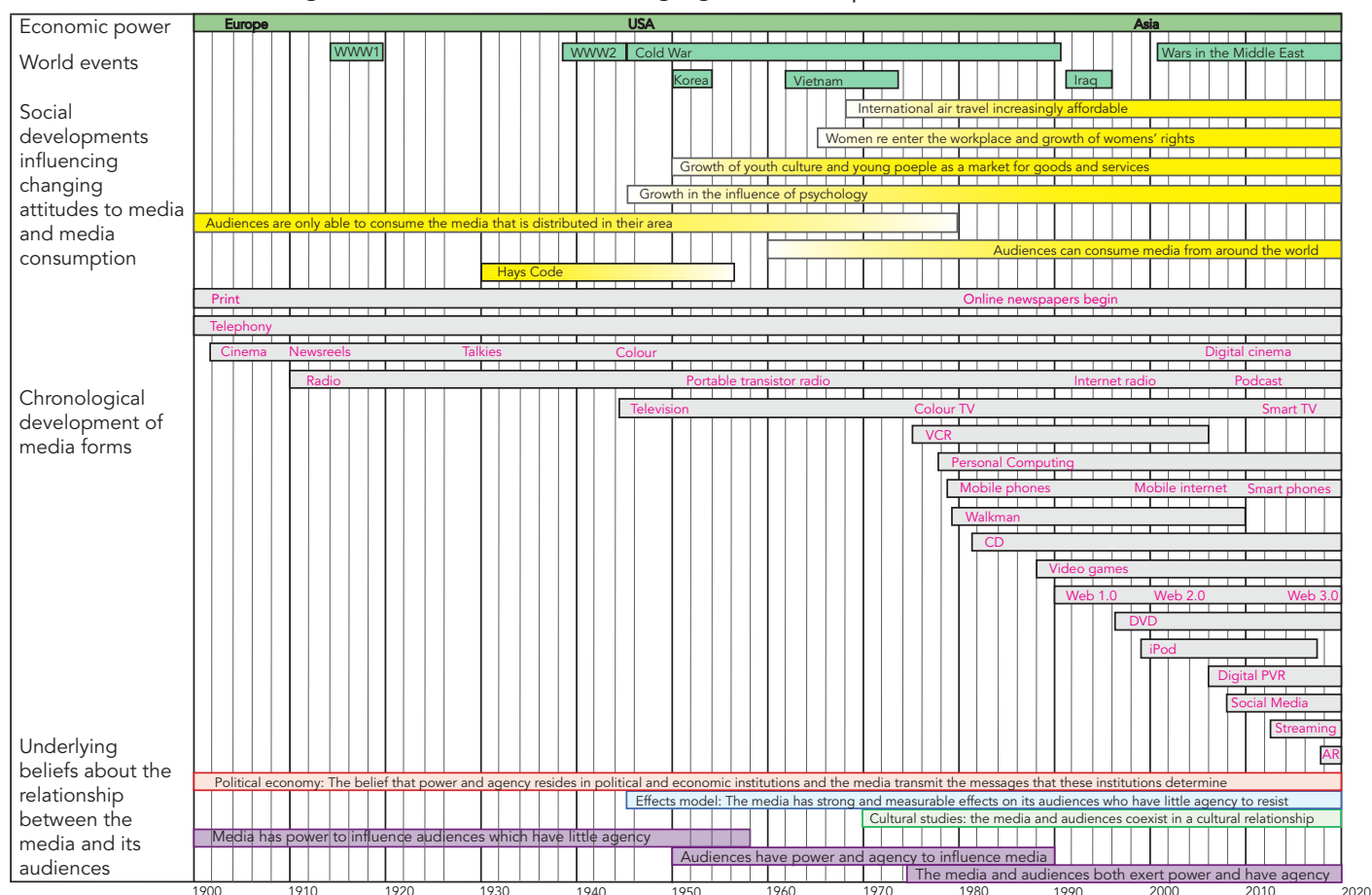
The entire study of mass communication is based on the premise that there are effects from the media, yet it seems to be the issue on which there is least certainty and least agreement.

Denis McQuail, academic and writer, 1987

Over the past 100 years, research into the effect of the media on its audiences has centred around four main stages.

At first, it was thought that mass media had the power to influence mass audiences in a one-way process that audiences had little power to resist. An example of this was propaganda. Later, the media was claimed to have limited effects on its audiences, who were said to use the media in a ritualistic way because consuming media was a pleasurable experience in itself. After the Second World War, the rise of the new science of psychology saw the media as able to have a strong impact on individuals, changing their thinking and actions. From the latter part of the 20th century, the media and its audiences have been thought of as in a relationship. The media is understood to have both strong and weak effects on individuals and audiences, who are also understood to have the power to influence the media through the choices they make in consuming and reading media texts, which, in turn, impacts on the construction and distribution of media.

Historical and technological influences on the changing relationship between the media and its audience



Activity 13.2 Mapping arguments and evidence

Over the past century, many points of view have been expressed to explain the relationship between the media and its audiences. Each has been influenced by the time and place of its inception, and the sociopolitical beliefs of its creator. Some are wildly contradictory; others build on what has come before. Many overlap.

While it is too simplistic to place each argument on a timeline, it is possible to represent the development of thinking about media influence graphically.

Download the timeline from 1900 to today, as shown on the previous page. The events shown are only a broad outline. Add others as you learn about them.

Use sheets of tracing paper and different colours to insert information that represents the development of arguments and evidence. These may include:

- introduction and widespread use of media technologies
- historical and news events that are used to support points of view about media influence
- arguments and evidence, including:
 - theories of audience
 - communication theories and models
 - research.

When you have finished, you will have a very useful set of data that illustrates the relationship between the development of the media and thinking about the media.



Early theories of media influence were about transmission

In the first part of the 20th century, early communication theories put forward the view that media products transmitted messages from the media to the audience. Media communication was understood as a linear process. Communication was considered hierarchical – transmitted from the top down, much like master to servant, boss to worker, military commander to subordinate, husband to wife. This was the ‘natural’ order of things at the time, and communication theory reflected this order. Those receiving any message were not expected to question it; they were thought to have little agency and were understood to act upon instructions from those in charge.

Early theories were less concerned with how media influence occurs; they focused more on the impact of propaganda and the negative effect of media messages on community standards. This was in keeping with the political and technological concerns of the day – the individual was less important than the state. Technologies were simple by today’s standards, yet more powerful than the forms of communication they replaced. Thus began the effects model – the media were considered to have direct and strong effects on the audience.

The introduction of each new media form is always accompanied by a lag in community understanding. Commentary and analysis of the potential impact of new media forms is therefore coloured by an incomplete grasp of its possibilities and limitations. This was certainly the case for media commentators in the early part of the 20th century. Skip forward 100 years and think about the moral panics that have surrounded recent developments such as social media and virtual reality. Now project yourself into the future and predict the next media-related moral panic.

The effects model of communication was dominant for the first half of the 20th century and influential even later. As it developed, each theory became increasingly detailed, taking into account more and more variables, most building on what had come before. Then, as now, media theorists borrowed heavily from other academic traditions.

A lie told often enough becomes the truth.

Lenin

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin nationalised the Russian film industry in 1919 and put it under control of the People’s Commissariat of Enlightenment, which demanded the production of films intended to glorify the 1917 Revolution. Lenin appreciated the propaganda value of the film industry, claiming in 1922 that: ‘Of all the arts, for us the cinema is the most important.’

The Frankfurt School

This school of philosophical and political thought originated at the Institute of Social Research in Frankfurt, Germany, in 1923. Frankfurt School theorists supported Karl Marx's theory of historical materialism, which held that the dominant class owned not only the means of production but also the production of dominant ideas and values.

The Frankfurt School believed that what they called the 'culture industry' (the mass media in mass society) was highly manipulative and served to control or subvert oppositional consciousness, thus supporting the dominant capitalist class. These beliefs were influenced by the experience of the beginning of communism in Russia and fascism in Italy, the First World War and the rise of Hitler in Germany. At this time, Frankfurt School philosophers, many of whom were of Jewish descent, were forced to relocate, first to Switzerland and then to America, where they worked until after the Second World War.

The Frankfurt School attempted to reconcile Marxist theory with the reality of the political and social upheaval of the Western world in the mid-20th century. These understandings came to be known as 'critical theory', aspects of which still influence some media research today.

The Frankfurt School returned to Germany in 1953.



Getty Images/ulstein bild

Figure 13.4 Walter Benjamin, who was to become renowned for his studies of literature and mass culture, was in the central core of the Frankfurt School in the 1920s and 1930s.

Getty Images/NY Daily News Archive



Figure 13.5 Some radio listeners panicked after hearing the broadcast of *The War of the Worlds*.

Hypodermic or bullet communication models

This simplistic explanation of the communication process holds that audiences are directly affected by the media messages they consume. While never considered a completely adequate explanation by media theorists, the hypodermic model has nevertheless taken on folkloric status. It is easy to understand, and this very simplicity makes it appealing to those who seek an explanation for what may be inexplicable. Do children really jump off the roof thinking they can fly? Will teenagers copy what they see in the movies? Can watching sexually explicit films make us immoral?

Perhaps the most famous example of the supposed efficacy of the hypodermic theory is the well-publicised and often exaggerated effect of Orson Welles's Mercury Theatre Company production of *The War of the Worlds* by HG Wells, which was broadcast in America on 30 October 1938. In his radio adaptation, Welles chose to set the play as a news broadcast, reporting on Martians invading New Jersey. Technically superior in its production values, it was later estimated by Hadley Cantril in his 1966 book *The Invasion from Mars* that 'about 20 percent of those listening to all or part of the broadcast exhibited hysterical panic reactions'.

Cantril further concluded that 'About 25 percent of the listeners who had become frightened quickly concluded that they were listening to a radio drama because of this time distortion and other internal inconsistencies of the broadcast'. This study has since been criticised as exaggerating the scope of the panic, being based on the reports of approximately 135 respondents.

Listen to the original broadcast to see what you think.



Weblink

Activity 13.3 Nothing kills the bullet theory

Even the most cursory consideration makes Media students realise that the bullet theory has more holes in it than a Quentin Tarantino shoot-out, yet this theory refuses to die.

Find examples where the media is claimed to have a direct effect on its audience:

- Search news reports and commentary, and investigate the numerous urban myths that are so often used as evidence for the bullet theory.
- Ask your parents and friends. Perhaps they can provide examples of the theory in practice, or perhaps they know of instances where it has been used to prevent young people watching a TV program or film.

Keep a record of your research. You will come back to it later to test it against other theories of media power.

Criticisms of the hypodermic theory

Clearly, a theory as simple as the bullet or hypodermic theory is as appealing in its simplicity as it is illogical in practice. While it does not stand modern scrutiny, we all revert to using such thinking from time to time, usually to explain or prevent an unpleasant event. Your parents may have banned a particular TV program in your household, for example, because they were concerned that you or your siblings might imitate the actions of characters.

The motivation for mass murder is almost impossible for most people to comprehend. Was the killer mad or bad? What triggered the event? How can a recurrence be prevented? 'The media made him do it!' is a convenient if doubtful explanation that suits both the community's need to attribute blame and the alleged killer's defence. The bullet theory lives on today in tabloid news reports about 'copycat' crimes.

As the world became accustomed to early forms of mass media, it developed a language with which to discuss them, and a paradigm shift occurred in thinking about media influence. It was as clear in the 1930s as it is today that most people do not copy everything they see in the media or believe every media message. The public is smarter than that; their reading of media messages was and is clearly influenced by other factors.

The main claim to fame for the hypodermic communication model is that it was the first of many theories, but today it barely rates a mention in authoritative media texts. It will be tempting to use this theory when writing about arguments about the influence of the media, but my strong advice is don't. It is not possible to apply it in any depth or to modern media. Use it as a stepping-off point for understanding how media theory has developed.

The Laswell model

Harold Laswell was a sociologist and political scientist who regarded propaganda as 'essential for government management of opinion', although he later came to question its effect. In his 1948 communication model, Laswell invited researchers to interrogate each stage of the communication process in the following way:

Who Says What In Which Channel To Whom With What Effect?

This approach allows for the study of each stage of the communication process in isolation, as well as considering the overall effect. The model opened the way for specific research focusing on the factors influencing each stage of the communication process (see Table 13.1). While Laswell's work was quickly overtaken by more sophisticated models, his five key questions are as relevant today as they

were in 1948. Market research company Qualtrics, which works to help some of the biggest companies in the world, including Microsoft and Spotify, to better target their advertising, puts it this way:

Five questions are critical in marketing communications and the creation of advertising. These are Who (Spokesperson), Says What (Advertising Message), To Whom (Target Audience), How (Which Media Channel), With What Effect (Desired Outcome).

www.qualtrics.com/support/research-resources/online-advertising-surveys-research

Table 13.1 The Laswell model

Who?	Says what?	In which channel?	To whom?	With what effect?
<i>Communicator</i>	<i>Message</i>	<i>Channel</i>	<i>Receiver</i>	<i>Effect</i>
Control research	Content research	Medium research	Audience research	Effects research
How does the ownership and control of the media form and text influence the message?	What is being communicated? How often is it being said? How are ideas and subjects represented?	How does the media form and its codes and conventions affect the message and its reception?	Who is the audience? What are their values? Why did they choose this text?	What effect does the message have on the audience? How does this effect vary? What can we do about it?

Activity 13.4 Applying Laswell to advertising

Choose an ad that has engaged you. Use the model devised by Laswell to work out what it is trying to do to its intended audience. You might like to look at the detail in the link above to help.

Create a visual representation of how the ad works. Can you think of any problems applying the model today?

The limited effects paradigm

By the mid-20th century, it became apparent that the media did not simply transmit messages into the brains of unsuspecting audiences. Not everyone did as the media said; the process is much more sophisticated than first thought. It became clear that the media had more limited effects on audiences. The search was on for a nuanced way of describing media influence and, for the first time, the role of audience agency came into focus.

In 1940, before television, Paul Lazarsfeld and colleagues studied the US presidential election and found that only 5 per cent of the population changed their voting intentions as a result of media messages. Lazarsfeld proposed that the media had only limited effects due to audiences' selective exposure to media messages – voters tended to avoid material about candidates whose politics they did not support, something audiences do to this day. Lazarsfeld's work introduced the idea that family and friends affect the way audiences read the media, thus the media had only limited effects.

Under the limited effects paradigm, mass communication is considered more likely to reinforce the existing opinions of its audience than to change opinions; people tend to tune in to or read media forms or texts that match their inclinations. In addition, they are more likely to respond to persuasive communication in line with their predispositions.

The limited effects paradigm was developed at a time when most members of the community had less access to the media than they do today, and when political leaders were less equipped to manage the media. The simplicity of the limited effects paradigm is appealing, but points to the dangers of using models to explain the media communication process, which in the real world is much more complex.

TWO-STEP AND MULTISTEP FLOW MODELS

Lazarsfeld and Elihu Katz developed the two-step flow model of communication. This model holds that not all members of a mass audience are equal, some are more influential than others; and that, while media messages are received by all, these 'opinion leaders' see themselves and are seen by others as influential in determining how audiences respond to the media. In those days, opinion leaders were thought to be people who stayed informed about politics and social issues, the people who were listened to in families, workplaces and in social situations. They were not the celebrity influencers of today.

The two-step flow model was an important development in the study of the relationship between the media and audiences because it established a link between mass media communication and interpersonal communication – the media put ideas out there, but people carry the message. There have been several significant developments to this model, including Denis McQuail's 1987 multistep flow model, which acknowledged that media messages may be carried between audience members who have no direct contact with the media or opinion leaders. Very recent theories that build on the idea that the media has limited effects on its audiences include the ideavirus and spreadable and stickable media (see page 368).

Public health campaigns often depend on multistep flow methodology to distribute and reinforce their message, because it has been found to be particularly relevant when attempting to influence those who are resistant to media messages. Audiences are more prone to be influenced by those who are similar to them than by those who are different. However, these campaigns are not always successful because, as Professor David Gauntlett from the University of Westminster points out, 'The mass media may be effective for providing information and creating awareness, but face-to-face channels are essential for behaviour change to be produced.'

Today we must consider the limited effects model in tandem with current thinking about how audiences make sense of media messages. The one thing that the multistep flow model cannot tell us is why people and opinion leaders share their readings of media. That development was yet to come.

The advent of convergent new media technologies, such as the internet and social media, has seen a resurgence of interest in the limited effects model. Using data aggregation techniques, intricate and often very beautiful visual representations of online communication can be produced to map complex interactions between users of online resources, including search engines, commercial sites and social media such as Pinterest, Facebook and Twitter. We still listen to our friends and family, but we also get our opinions from online opinion leaders, friends and **social media influencers**.

Activity 13.5 Multistep flow and you

Choose a conversation or event that has occurred in your social media feed over the last couple of days and map it using a multistep flow chart like the one in Figure 13.7.

Now add the factors, as far as you can judge them, that led to sharing or not sharing during this event. You may not be aware of many, but if you want to know more about why people share, flick over to page 368 and read about spreadable and stickable media.

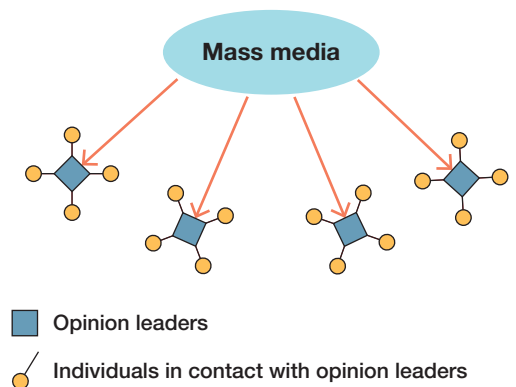


Figure 13.6 The two-step flow model

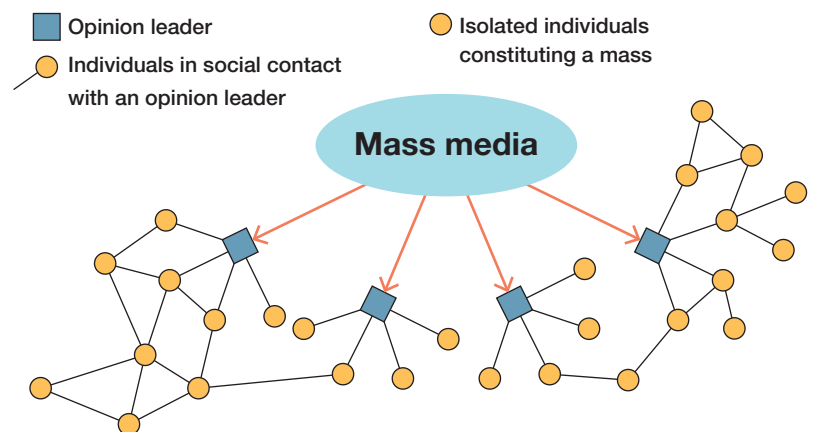


Figure 13.7 The multistep flow model

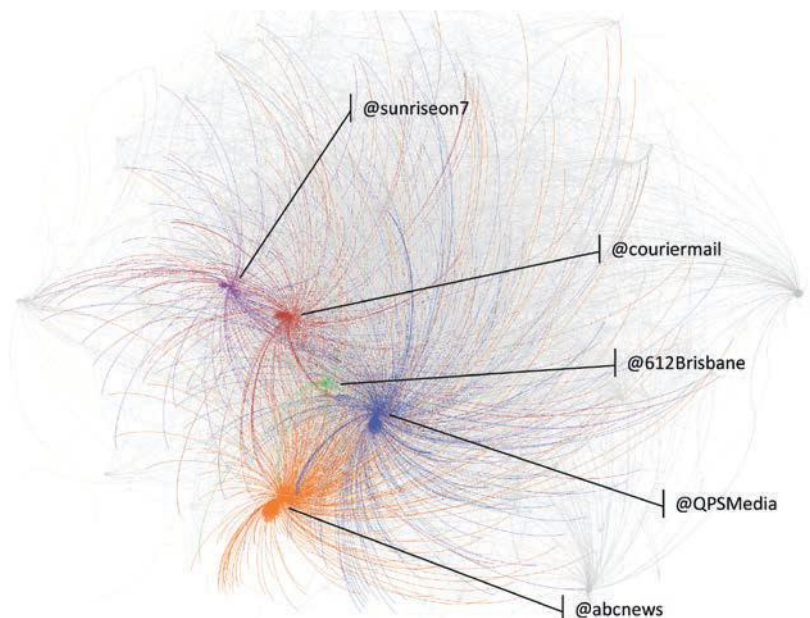


Figure 13.8 The multistep flow of information about the 2011 Queensland floods via Twitter. From Axel Bruns, Jean Burgess, Kate Crawford and Frances Shaw. *#qldfloods and @QPSMedia: Crisis Communication on Twitter in the 2011 South East Queensland Floods*. Brisbane: ARC Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation, 2012. <http://cci.edu.au/floodsreport.pdf>

Social learning theory

In the 1960s, psychologist Albert Bandura devised the social learning theory to explain how people learn. This theory hypothesised that people learn from one another through observational learning, imitation and modelling, and outlines three requirements for people to learn and copy behaviour:

- attention and retention of what has been observed
- the ability to reproduce the behaviour
- motivation for adopting the behaviour.

Social learning describes those uses of the media where audiences learn how to behave in a certain situation. The application of Bandura's research to media has been highly criticised as a leap too far, but its popularity lies in its simplicity. This phenomenon has been claimed to be responsible for the resounding popularity of lifestyle and reality programming – OzTAM ratings regularly reveal that around half of the top-rating TV programs are in these genres. In her research into the media consumption habits of teenage girls, Professor Catharine Lumby discovered that 'A great surprise of the twenty-first century is that people like watching other people living; they're curious to see how other people live, literally.' Can you remember learning some social behaviour from the media?

AGENDA-SETTING FUNCTIONS OF THE MEDIA

We judge as important what the media judge as important.

Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw

The agenda setting theory holds that the function of the media is not to tell audiences what to think, but what to think about, and how to think about it.

Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw, creators of the agenda setting theory, conducted research into the 1972 US presidential election, in which they determined that major news media were much more interested in reporting the analysis of each candidate's campaign rather than the debate of the political issues. In addition, they discovered that the mass media influenced the voter's assessment of the major issues of the campaign.

The theory has two levels:

- The media sets the news agenda by telling audiences which issues are important.
- The media then suggests to audiences how they might think about an issue and which aspects of it are more important than others.

Agenda setting occurs through a process called **gatekeeping**, in which the media controls the flow of information to audiences and thus determines a dominant or preferred reading of any given issue. The media also engages in a process termed 'priming', in which some issues are given coverage while others are ignored or minimised. Of course, the media cannot publish everything; there is simply too much. What criteria do the gatekeepers use and who is setting the agenda for the agenda setters?

The media is influenced by many factors, including ownership, regulation and control, knowledge of its audiences and their values, access to footage and sources, as well as the social and political context in which it operates. Professor Graeme Turner estimates that up to 85 per cent of Australian news and current affairs is broadcast as the result of press releases rather than reporting, which is a lot of potential influence. Governments and large organisations employ public relations specialists to promote their views and manage their interests in the media. These lobbyists or spin doctors use the news cycle and **news values** to influence the media. For more on news values, see page 82.

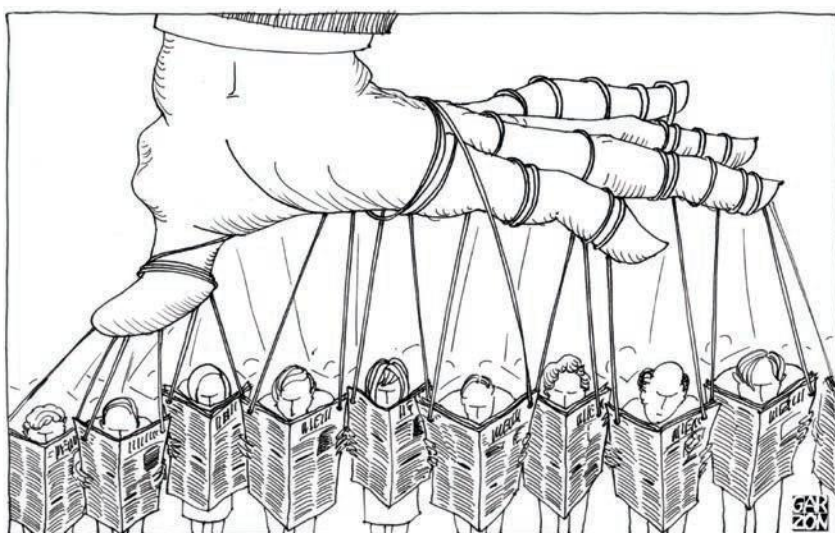


Figure 13.9 The danger of agenda setting

Agenda setting is a theory that is easy to understand, but determining the effects of gatekeeping on audiences is surprisingly difficult. Researchers must correlate media effects research with content research over time. Has News Limited's campaign against the carbon tax influenced voters? How can we know?

Gatekeepers do not merely keep watch over information, shuffling it here and there. Instead, they engage in active construction of the messages, emphasising certain aspects of an issue and not others.

Gerald Kosicki, Professor of Journalism, Ohio State University

Agenda setting was an important development in communication theory and has had a lasting effect. More recently, agenda setting theorists have turned their interest to how the media organises or frames the news through the selection, emphasis, exclusion and elaboration of content, which led to framing theory (see page 360).

PRACTICAL TIP

This chapter contains excerpts from research into the relationship between audiences and the media. These excerpts provide evidence to support your analysis of this relationship. Most are in the form of an abstract, which is a summary of the research and its findings. There are links to the full research paper, which you can read online if you want more detail.

What is good research?

- Good research can be repeated with the same results.
- The results are generalisable to other settings.
- Good research recognises and acknowledges its limitations; it does not try to solve a problem.
- Peer review: the research has been read and approved by anonymous experts in the field before it is published.

How should you read academic papers? Research papers are written for scientists and the language can be challenging. However, there are a few short cuts to see

if the full paper is useful. Read the abstract first. In your own words, note:

- What was the research trying to find out?
- What did the researchers do?
- What were the results?

To read the full paper, reread the abstract then read the introduction, which gives the context of the research. Next go to the conclusion and discussion at the end of the research, which provides detail about the results. If you want to know more, you can then read the body of the research.

Some research is in the form of a literature review, which is a critical analysis of published sources on a particular topic.

Many research reports begin with executive summaries of everything that follows. This is a great place to start and can provide well-written points of evidence.

Do not try to understand everything. Skim through the paper and find parts that interest you. Ask your teacher for help if you need it.

THE KYLIE EFFECT: IMPACT OF NEWS OF CELEBRITY ILLNESS ON BREAST CANCER SCREENING: KYLIE MINOGUE'S BREAST CANCER DIAGNOSIS

ABSTRACT

Objectives:

To describe the main media narratives in the reportage of singer Kylie Minogue's illness with breast cancer; and to assess the impact of this coverage on bookings for screening for breast cancer by mammography in four Australian states.

Setting:

Government sponsored BreastScreen programs in Queensland, Victoria, Tasmania and Western Australia.

Main outcome measures:

Narratives on breast cancer in television news programs 17–27 May 2005; initial and re-screening bookings for mammograms.

Participants:

Women aged ≥ 40 years who booked for mammograms in BreastScreen programs in the 19 weeks before, the 2 weeks during, and the 6 weeks after the publicity.

Results:

There was a 20-fold increase in news coverage of breast cancer, which emphasised that young women do get breast cancer and that early detection was critical. Overall screening bookings rose 40% in the 2 weeks of the publicity, with a 101% increase in non-screened women in the eligible age-group 40–69 years. Six weeks after the publicity, bookings remained more than a third higher in non-screened women.

Conclusions:

News coverage of Kylie Minogue's breast cancer diagnosis caused an unprecedented increase in bookings for mammography. Health advocates should develop anticipatory strategies for responding to news coverage of celebrity illness.

For more detail on the research, including a detailed analysis of the news coverage, see the full report in the Medical Journal of Australia.

Chapman S, Holding S, McLeod K and Wakefield M. Impact of news of celebrity illness on breast cancer screening: Kylie Minogue's breast cancer diagnosis. Med J Aust 2005; 183 (5): 247–250. © Copyright 2005 The Medical Journal of Australia – reproduced with permission.



Activity 13.6 Agenda setting in practice

Consider the coverage the media has given to a recent event.

- 1 Choose an event or story that has received a great deal of coverage in the press. Collect and examine all the material you can from both print and audiovisual media.
 - a Does the media have a preferred reading? Is this reading evident across all media or particular to one company?
 - b What does the media want audiences to think about the issue?
- 2 List the issues that researchers would need to consider when analysing the media coverage of a major event or story covered by the media.
- 3 Can you apply any other arguments or evidence that could be used to explain media coverage of this event?

CULTIVATION THEORY

Cultivation theory is the belief that the media – and TV in particular – has become the main source of storytelling in today's society and that it cultivates certain attitudes in its audiences. In the 1960s and 1970s, Professor George Gerbner undertook systematic **content research** of prime-time TV to determine what he termed 'cultural indicators'. This research quantified the representation of major social groups on TV and the number of violent acts per hour. It identified viewers as either heavy or light users.

Cultivation theorists argue that TV has long-term effects that are small, gradual, indirect but cumulative and significant. The dominant effect is termed 'mainstreaming'; that is, the 'blurring, blending and bending' of attitudes, which confirm fears and prejudices about the 'way things are'. TV demonstrates and therefore reinforces common beliefs. As a consequence, heavy TV viewers are more likely to see the world in the way TV portrays it. Thus TV's images cultivate 'the dominant tendencies of our culture's beliefs, ideologies and worldviews', building the convergence of people's concepts of reality to that portrayed on TV.

Gerbner's research determined that the depiction of minority groups was not an accurate representation of US society, and that women and minority groups are more likely to be constructed as the victims of TV violence. Middle-class white characters appeared more often than African-American or Hispanic characters, but were less likely to suffer violence. The number of people who work in law enforcement and the amount of violent crime were over-represented when compared to real life. Cultivation theorists argue that the effect of this is that audiences come to believe that such representations are accurate, that the media has a socialising impact on audiences. Gerbner also found that the quantity of violence on TV varied little from year to year. Follow the weblink to view a short video that summarises, albeit in an overdramatic way, Gerbner's views.

Cultivation theorists did not take into account the different ways in which the media might be read by audiences. Are some audiences more or less susceptible than others? What makes some audiences heavy viewers and what types of programs do they watch? What other factors may influence the meaning viewers make of the media they consume? For example, research has shown that the groups that watch the most TV are those under five years of age and the elderly. What might this mean in terms of cultivation?

The mean world syndrome, an extension of cultivation theory, is the idea that watching TV alters audience perception of reality to believe that the world is worse than it actually is. Evidence for this belief can be found in attitudinal research. Cultivation theory continues to underpin media effects research today, as the following research proposal reveals.



Weblink

TELEVISION'S CULTIVATION OF AMERICAN ADOLESCENTS' BELIEFS ABOUT ALCOHOL AND THE MODERATING ROLE OF TRAIT REACTANCE

Published in final edited form as:
J Child Media. 2014 January

Authors:

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ABSTRACT

Cultivation research has shown that heavy television viewing is linked to audiences' generalized, and often skewed, views of reality. This research investigates whether television viewing is related to

adolescents' views about the consequences of drinking and whether psychological trait reactance moderates this cultivation effect. Results from a survey of 445 American teenagers show that cumulative exposure to television is linked to reduced beliefs about alcohol's negative consequences and greater intentions to drink. These effects were greater for adolescents low on trait reactance. This research adds to the general psychological research on trait reactance

as a moderator of media influences and makes a substantive contribution towards furthering our understanding of the media and public health concerns that surround risky adolescent behaviors.

Cristel Antonia Russell, PhD, MBA, Dale Wesley Russell, PhD, MBA, MS, Wendy Attaya Boland, PhD, MBA, and Joel W. Grube, PhD, Television's Cultivation of American Adolescents' Beliefs about Alcohol and the Moderating Role of Trait Reactance, J Child Media. 2014 Jan 1; 8(1): 5-22.

Activity 13.7 Analysing the underlying assumptions of research

The research abstracts outlined throughout this chapter are based on assumptions about the media and/or its audiences.

Analyse each abstract to determine the nature of these assumptions and any flaws you might see in the applicability for the community of the results that will be obtained.

REINFORCEMENT THEORY

Have you ever yelled at the TV when something upsets you? You may have been using the TV to reinforce your understanding of how the world should be. A precursor to the uses and gratifications approach, Joseph Klapper's reinforcement theory holds that audiences use the media to reinforce their existing beliefs and values.

One problem with reinforcement theory occurs when audiences experience new information – something that they have never considered or experienced before. How will audiences react to something they have not experienced or thought about? What effects might such new material have on audiences?

Mass communication ordinarily does not serve as a necessary and sufficient cause of audience effects, but rather functions among and through a nexus of mediating factors and influences ... These mediating factors are such that they typically render mass communication a contributory agent, but not the sole cause, in a process of reinforcing the existing conditions.

Joseph Klapper, 1960

USES AND GRATIFICATIONS THEORY: AUDIENCE AGENCY COMES INTO ITS OWN

The uses and gratifications approach explores the multiple functions the media plays in the lives of audiences. Originating in the 1970s and enjoying a resurgence today, the uses and gratifications theory was initially a reaction to the inadequacies of transmission models – which ignored the role of audience motivation in its relationship with the media. This approach is primarily associated with the work of Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch, and of Denis McQuail. These theorists did not dismiss the possibility of the media having an effect on audiences, but sought to understand how audiences use the media to gratify their needs.

How do audiences use the media?

Uses and gratifications researchers differentiate two main types of media use:

- Instrumental: goal-oriented, such as finding out what the weather will be tomorrow, choosing to watch a particular drama, or checking out the latest album from a favourite band.
- Ritualistic: to do with wider needs, such as to relax or to be entertained or simply to mark time. How often have you used the theme to a TV program as the signal that it is bedtime, or set your phone to wake you up?

Why do audiences use the media?

Even the most potent of the mass media content cannot ordinarily influence an individual who has 'no use' for it in the social and psychological context in which he lives. The 'uses' approach assumes that people's values, their interests, their associations, their social roles, are pre-potent, and that people selectively 'fashion' what they see and hear to these interests.

Elihu Katz, sociologist and communications scientist, 1959

Uses and gratifications theory is concerned with the reasons why audiences consume the media products they choose. These needs are understood to include the following:

- Surveillance: we like to keep an eye on what is happening in the world, to find out what is going on, to learn, to satisfy our curiosity, to find information and to reassure ourselves about our personal security.
- Personal identity: we use the media to find out who we are by comparing ourselves with others, by identifying with someone we value, by reinforcing our beliefs and by finding models of behaviour.
- Personal relationships: the media helps us to gain insight into the lives of others, to empathise, to give us something to talk about with our friends and families (the 'water-cooler' effect), to give us a point of connection and interaction with others, or to build relationships.
- Diversion: the media can help us to relieve stress, to relax, to fill in time, to give emotional release, or just be for fun.

People don't actually read newspapers. They step into them every morning like a hot bath.

Marshall McLuhan

Activity 13.8 Test how you use the media to satisfy your personal needs

Use a media log to record your use of the media over one week. Then classify your media consumption according to the descriptions above.

What uses could such research be put to?

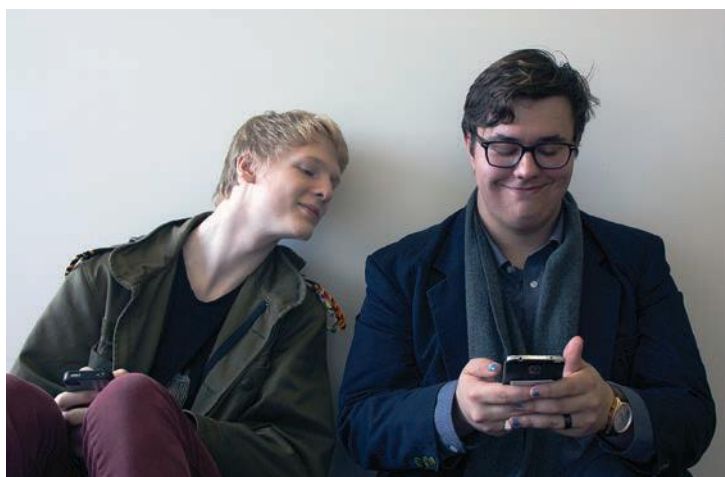


Figure 13.10 The media can help us to relieve stress, to relax, to fill in time, to give emotional release, or just be for fun.

Criticisms of the uses and gratifications theory

The uses and gratifications theory is not able to predict media use or provide a causal explanation between audiences' choices in media consumption and any effects on behaviour because so much media consumption is spontaneous or incidental. The theory is also unable to account for the effects of context on audiences' media selection and use. But of course, that is not its point. It is all about audience agency.

Uses and gratifications theory is at its best when it seeks to explain why individuals select the media they use. This has made it very useful in recent years for the study of the relationship between digital media and audiences.

The uses and gratifications approach sees the audience as powerful and active, at the centre of the media and as the focus of analysis, but questions may be asked about this approach: How can we consider audience agency in isolation from the power of the media they choose to consume? Are audiences autonomous, or are they controlled by the very media to which they turn for gratification? Uses and gratifications theory pays little attention to the content of media and, as cultivation theorists point out, content is important in shaping a world view that predisposes audiences to particular media and ways of thinking.

Qualitative research – surveys, observation and interviews – tell researchers why audiences use the media they do. However, this research method is open to criticism: how reliable and insightful can audiences be in understanding their use of the media?

The uses and gratifications approach begins with the belief that the media is always functional in the lives of audiences – but what if it is not? Cultural studies theorist Professor Ien Eng from the University of Western Sydney is a critic of the uses and gratifications approach. Eng questions the legitimacy of dealing with the psychological needs and desires of an audience in isolation from the social context in which the media is consumed. How can we examine the uses to which the media are put without also studying content, ideology and hegemony, which Eng and other cultural theorists see as integral to the social construct – of the relationship between the media and its audiences? Exactly what meanings do audiences make from their media consumption and how do these link to gratification?

Uses and gratifications developments

When first conceived in the 1970s, the uses and gratifications approach was about what the audience does with the media, but now we think of it in more constructivist terms. Audiences are understood to select media to gratify a range of needs and desires, but it is believed that the meaning they construct from the media varies according to factors including motivation, the values of the time and place in which they live, education and expectations of the media form and text they are consuming.

Another difference between the 1970s and today is the quantity and variety of media available to consumers. In the 1970s, audiences were only able to access the media broadcast or released in their market; few could access media from other countries, or even other States. Thus audiences had to choose from the films, TV, print and radio available to them. The nature of media was therefore almost entirely controlled by market forces and cultural norms of the time. This limitation influenced thinking about media influence – audiences could only gratify their needs from a limited range of choices.

Today, online technologies have seen the availability of media explode and make it easier than ever before to research audiences. As a result, there has been a resurgence of interest in the uses and gratifications theory. Most online media users also create content through their social media feeds and are interested in learning how and why it works for them. They are happy to participate in research that seeks to explain new media phenomena.

Structural and social uses of the media

Audiences use media texts to order their day. These structural uses include using the media as markers of time – such as waking up to the radio, waiting until the weather report before getting out of bed and knowing that we have to leave the house before a certain program comes on or we will miss the train. In the evening, the timing of rituals such as meals, study and bedtime are also often regulated by media cues, such as the *Neighbours* theme indicating dinnertime. The question that must be asked in these cases is: are such structural uses a kind of Pavlovian conditioned response to the media, or is the media simply serving as a fancy clock?

A social use of the media is in the way we employ it as an aid to developing and maintaining our personal relationships. These relational uses include the way discussion about a recent media event can form part of a greeting or a conversation starter among friends or colleagues: ‘Hey did you download that cool promo last night?’ It is likely that your Media teacher uses such a device to begin classes or topics in Media, and that you and your friends have already conducted such a conversation today.

A feature of media research today is the study of the social uses of the media. The following study arises from the uses and gratifications approach, but applies it in a modern context.

INSTAGRAM: MOTIVES FOR ITS USE AND RELATIONSHIP TO NARCISSISM AND CONTEXTUAL AGE

Pavica Sheldon, Katherine Bryant
Department of Communication Arts,
University of Alabama Huntsville, US

ABSTRACT

Instagram is the fastest growing social network site globally. This study investigates motives for its use, and its relationship to contextual age and narcissism. A survey of 239 college students revealed that the main reasons for Instagram use are 'Surveillance/Knowledge about others,' 'Documentation,'

'Coolness,' and 'Creativity'. The next significant finding was a positive relationship between those who scored high in interpersonal interaction and using Instagram for coolness, creative purposes, and surveillance. Another interesting finding shows that there is a positive relationship between high levels of social activity (traveling, going to sporting events, visiting friends, etc.) and being motivated to use Instagram as a means of documentation. In reference

to narcissism, there was a positive relationship between using Instagram to be cool and for surveillance. Theoretical contributions of this study relate to our understanding of uses and gratifications theory. This study uncovers new motives for social media use not identified in previous literature.

Pavica Sheldon, Katherine Bryant, 'Instagram: Motives for its use and relationship to narcissism and contextual age', *Computers in Human Behavior* 58 (2016) 89–97

User-generated content, mobile phone apps and image and video sharing sites are among the new media forms that require research into the dynamic and ever-expanding relationship between audiences and the media. Media institutions and governments, as well as uses and gratifications theorists, have responded with research that explores this relationship. Some of this research is outlined in Chapter 8, but you can also access it online. Here are some useful sites:

- It's Complicated: The social lives of networked teens by danah boyd
- ACMA research index on Australian media use, which is regularly updated
- PEW Internet Research Centre index on American media use, regularly updated
- Interactive Games and Entertainment Association (IGEA) for research on video gaming
- ThinkTV research on Australian television use.

A word of warning: academic uses and gratifications research has blossomed during the 2000s, but this research can date very quickly; research done at the beginning of the century, for example, is unlikely to remain current because it could not predict the impact of new media technologies such as social media.



Weblink

THE PHONE CONNECTION: A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF HOW BELONGINGNESS AND SOCIAL IDENTIFICATION RELATE TO MOBILE PHONE USE AMONGST AUSTRALIAN YOUTH

This study explores three major themes in relation to young people's mobile phone use: connectedness, belonging and social identity.

Mobile phone use is a prevalent behaviour amongst youth; however, there is little research to determine psychological influences on mobile phone use. This paper reports the results of a qualitative exploration into social psychological factors relating to young people's mobile phone use. Focus groups were conducted with 32 participants, aged

between 16 and 24 years. Three major themes, connectedness, belonging, and social identity, were explored in relation to young people's mobile phone use. Easy contact with others when using a mobile phone facilitated connectedness between people. A need to remain connected emerged in participants' descriptions of their mobile phone use. Consequently, data were analysed for factors underpinning people's desire to be connected. It emerged that mobile phones were used to enhance feelings of

belonging amongst youth. Additionally, group norms influenced mobile phone behaviour indicating that social identity processes are related to mobile phone use. Results in the study provide a foundation upon which to investigate further the relationship between mobile phone use and psychological factors impacting on young people's social development.

Shari Poldi Walsh, Katherine Marie White and Ross McD Young, *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 2009, Edition 3, p. 405.

MEDIA DEPENDENCY THEORY

As media theories develop, they build on what has come before. Media dependency theory is a development of the uses and gratifications approach, which also adds elements of agenda setting theory. In 1976 theorists DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach believed that the media should be studied together with audiences and the social systems in which both live. Media dependency theory holds that the more dependent an individual is on the media for having their needs fulfilled, the more important the media will be to that person.

The theory argues that the media, audiences and society as a whole are all dependent on one another. The degree of dependency varies across time and between audience members and is determined by a number of social, structural and psychological factors, including the relationship between the society and the media, the relationship between the media and the audience and the relationship between the society and the audience. It holds that the media provides content that it determines its audiences will want because it must maximise audiences in order to survive financially.

Audience dependency on the media varies according to three social needs:

- the need to understand one's social world
- the need to act meaningfully and effectively in that world
- the need to escape from that world when tensions are high.

Thus, at times of high stress, such as a disaster or terrorist attack, the audience is claimed to depend on the media more to make sense of the situation, to be able to live effectively and to relieve anxiety.

Dependency theory holds that the media effects on its audiences can be one or more of the following:

- Cognitive: changes to attitudes, beliefs or values
- Affective: development of feelings such as fear or anxiety, desensitisation to a message or alienation from a group in society due to prolonged exposure to a media message
- Behavioural: audiences act differently as a result of media consumption, such as joining a political group or not associating with a group of people.

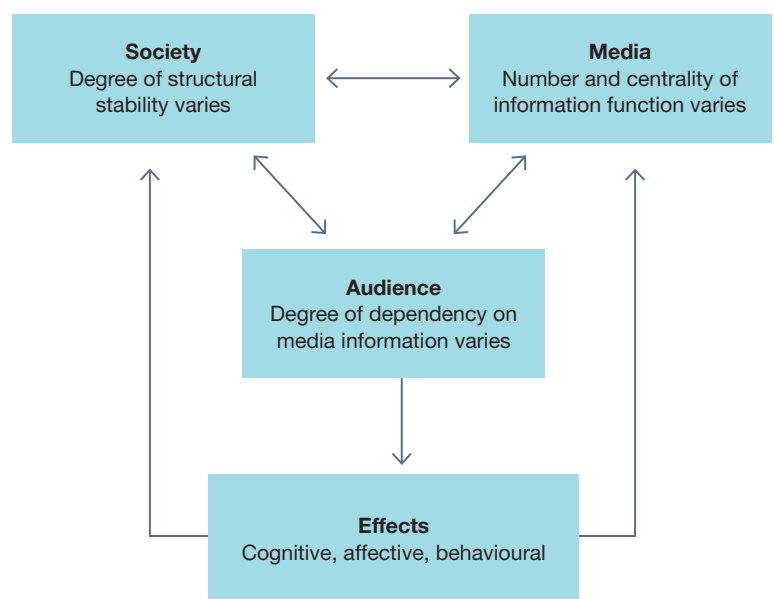


Figure 13.11 Dependency theory sees the media, its audiences and society all dependent on one another.

Wikimedia Commons/Chanceyork23 (CC SA BY 3.0)

MOBILE MEDIA DEPENDENCY: PRIVATE CONSUMPTION IN PUBLIC SPACES

Author: Yi-Fan Chen i
Assistant Professor of Communication at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, VA, USA.

ABSTRACT

Rich Ling (2012) argued that mobile media provided a taken-for-granted link to their users in public spaces. Mobile media were social mediating devices that users used to connect with their social networks and access to information. Mobile media users developed strong attachments to their devices and felt anxiety when the users were without their devices. It was important to understand the dependency between mobile media users and their

devices. This paper utilized Sandra Ball-Rokeach's (1976) Media Dependency Theory to understand why mobile media users developed dependencies on their devices in public spaces. Based on Ball-Rokeach and colleagues' (1984) typology of the individual mass media dependency relations, this paper further examined how mobile media users depended on their devices in public spaces and the implications for future Studies. Results included that mobile media users depended on their devices to build their self-identities and group identities. They depended on their devices to navigate

unfamiliar places, make decisions, and learn how to interact with others. They also used the devices to block unwanted interactions and coordinate with family members and friends. They depended on their mobile devices to read books, watched videos, and listened to music, as well as updated their social network in public spaces.

Yi-Fan Chen, PhD, 'Mobile media dependency: Private consumption in public spaces', <http://docplayer.net/30846162-Running-head-mobile-media-dependency-1-mobile-media-dependency-private-consumption-in-public-spaces.html>

Criticisms of the media dependency theory, like those for all theories that rely on subjects' reporting on or interpreting their own behaviour, are around the veracity (truthfulness) and accuracy of such reporting. As arguments and evidence for the influence of the media on its audiences and the influence of audiences on the media grew in complexity in the latter part of the 20th century, it became increasingly difficult to determine the mechanisms of this relationship.

MEDIUM THEORY

We shape our tools and afterwards our tools shape us.

Marshall McLuhan

What if it is not content but the very media forms themselves that influence users? This is the basis of the theory of technological determinism, which became known as medium theory and later as media ecology. This belief has underwritten many moral panics about the impact of new technologies over the years. Medium theory was first devised by Marshall McLuhan, whose famous 1964 saying 'The medium is the message' is perhaps the most famous proclamation of the theory with which he was associated. Medium theory explores how a media form creates possibilities for communication and the impacts the form has on society. It is less interested in the content of the media form than the form itself.

McLuhan generally thought that new media forms would have a positive impact on society and predicted that, through television, we would see a 'global village' where the world would adopt television's systems of universal address and shared culture.

Media ecology

In the 1980s, Neil Postman developed McLuhan's ideas further into media ecology, also known as the Toronto School. At this time, the impact of media on society came to be viewed more negatively.

Media ecology studies media forms as an environment, a complex message system that imposes certain ways of thinking, feeling and behaving on society, structuring what we can see, say and do, assigning roles to each participant in the media environment.

Sometimes termed **technological determinism**, media ecology can be found at the heart of many prophetic statements whenever new media technologies are developed. Today, the internet is said to force 'inevitable' change with 'far-reaching consequences' on society. Whether the tone of such technological determinist statements is positive or negative depends on the standpoint of the commentator. Fears about the impact of new media technologies are inevitable, but is there truth in the argument?

Embedded in every tool is an ideological bias, a predisposition to construct the world as one thing rather than another, to value one thing over another, to amplify one sense or skill or attitude more loudly than another.

Neil Postman

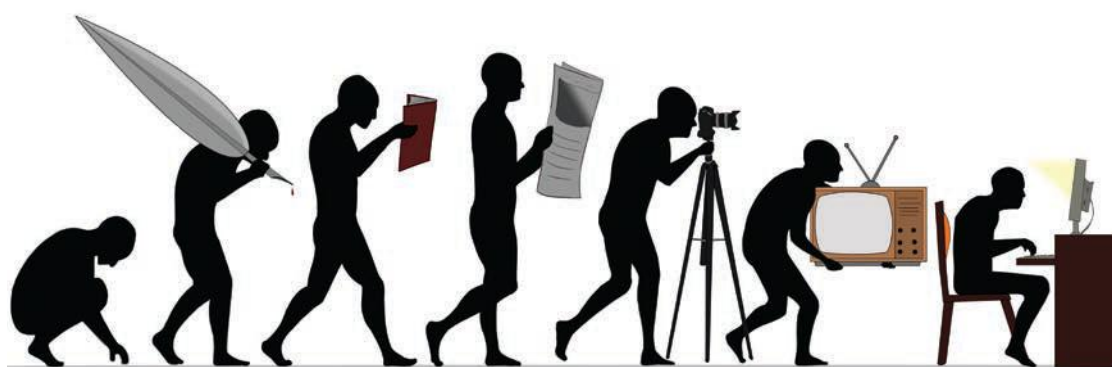


Figure 13.12 Like all theories, media ecology has an ideological bias.

As with every theory, there are elements of medium theory that provide a structure with which to think about the relationship between the media and its audiences. New media forms select some ideas, methods of communication and experiences over others. At first, new technologies are novel, often promoted as the next big thing, but still distrusted by society. But with increasing familiarity, the technology and its codes and conventions are **naturalised**; they simply become part of life and we do not think about the way they construct the world.

Consumers notice the elements of construction in new media but not in older forms. Do you remember texting for the first time? And what about Facebook? Twenty years ago, the thought of conducting friendships online would have been considered horrifying, but today it is part of life. At first, technology seems to get in the way of communication, but after a while this mediated communication comes to seem normal, just the way things are. You probably don't think of reading this textbook as mediated communication, but it is – print is simply an older technology. We tend not to notice the codes and conventions that shape a book's representation of reality.

Media ecologists approach the study of media influence from a particular point of view. Postman expressed the view in his famous book *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, believed that 'there is a limit to the promise of new technology, and that it cannot be a substitute for human values'. Postman was critical of new media technologies, and while it is difficult to argue with his assertion that 'I don't think any of us can do much about the rapid growth of new technology'. His contention that 'it is possible for us to learn how to control our own uses of technology ... to be adults who use technology rather than be used by it' reveals a belief of new media technologies that is often at odds with contemporary thinking.

Like all theories, media ecology has something to offer students of the media. It is up to you to test how far you believe this theory takes us and to determine its relevance in today's world. How much influence does a media form itself have over agency and control in and of the media?

I think that technologies are morally neutral until we apply them. It's only when we use them for good or for evil that they become good or evil.

William Gibson, cyberpunk novelist

Activity 13.9 Technological determinism: test it out

Choose one new and one older media form and analyse each in terms of how they mediate reality. Examine how each media form suggests meaning through the technological processes that structure communication as it selects and exaggerates some aspects of the world over others.

The spiral of silence

Have you ever been in one of those meeting-at-the-locker conversations where she says, 'OMG, did you see him on TV last night? He is soooooo hot!!!' And then he says, 'He is built. I bet he works out every day.' And everyone within earshot swoons and agrees and goes all admiring (the boys) and mushy (the girls) ... but not you? You don't say anything, because you disagree but don't want everyone to think you are a loser? Perhaps you have experienced the spiral of silence.

The spiral of silence is a model that describes the formation and management of public opinion. Created in 1993 by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, a German public opinion pollster, it is a development of cultivation theory and agenda setting.

The spiral of silence seeks to explain why people are unwilling to publicly express their opinions when they believe they are in the minority. According to this model, people have a fear of isolation and an ability to gauge public sentiment, knowing what behaviours will increase their likelihood of being socially isolated. They are reluctant to express their minority views, primarily out of fear of being isolated. If an individual believes their opinion is similar to prevailing public opinion, they will be more willing to openly disclose that opinion in public.

The media accelerates the muting of the minority in the spiral of silence. This inhibits people from voicing an opinion contrary to the one projected because people believe that media opinion reflects majority opinion. For Noelle-Neumann, TV was the most important medium in influencing opinion. She believed that testing for media effects in the laboratory cannot recreate the 'ubiquity, consonance, and cumulation' that gives TV its power. TV is everywhere; it tends to broadcast a single point of view and constantly repeats its message. Think about how often a few seconds of footage from an

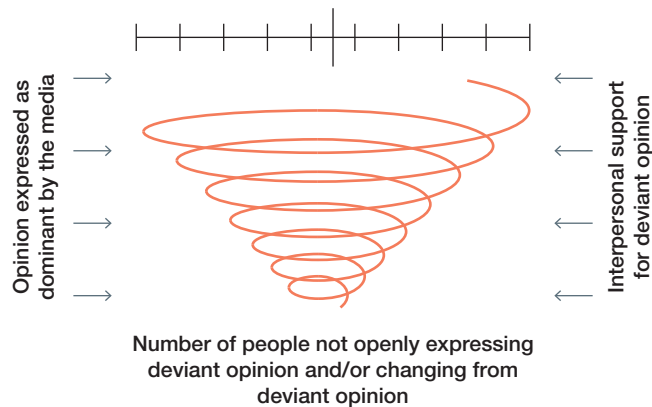


Figure 13.13 The spiral of silence

interview or news item is repeated throughout a day's programming as promotion for the evening news. Noelle-Neumann believes this is an example of the power of TV to influence public opinion.

I have never found a spiral of silence that goes against the tenor of the media, for the willingness to speak out depends in part upon sensing that there is support and legitimization from the media.

Elizabeth Noelle-Neumann

The spiral of silence sees the media playing an intrusive role in democratic decision making. Noelle-Neumann ascribes a function to the media that goes one step beyond agenda setting. The media in general, and TV in particular, not only tell us what to think about, they provide the sanctioned view of what it claims everyone else is thinking.

Opinion leaders and politicians are well aware of the power of the media in shaping public opinion, and the spiral of silence in part explains their ability to use doorstep interviews effectively to express one main point in a neatly packaged sound bite that reflects their opinion polling and thus the majority view.

While the spiral of silence has primarily been used to explain changes in public opinion in the political sphere, it is equally applicable to less weighty matters. One example is the impact of public opinion on media texts and personalities. For media texts and personalities, as well as politicians, positive press is a valuable commodity.

Of course, many people are anxious about what their friends will think of them, particularly on social media. Politics is a topic that many social media users steer clear of, as was evident in the 2016 British and US elections. Follow the link to read the article 'Why many people don't "like" politics on Facebook – they're worried what their friends will think' from *The Conversation*, which explains this phenomenon. Do you comment on politics on social media? If so, what kind of reaction do you get, and if not, why?

The spiral of silence is a useful tool for explaining many aspects of the relationship between media texts and audiences but, like all theories, is not applicable on all occasions. Can you think of an occasion where the spiral of silence was not evident in public discourse?



Weblink

QUIETING THE COMMENTERS: THE SPIRAL OF SILENCE'S PERSISTENT EFFECT ON ONLINE NEWS FORUMS

By Hans K Meyer and Burton Speakman
The Internet may help overcome the spiral of silence because posters can remain anonymous. Forum moderators could alleviate some concerns by imposing group norms, such as moderation, to ensure civility. Through a nationwide survey, this

study focuses specifically on comments at the end of news stories to examine the impact journalists can have on the conversation. Despite online advantages, the study finds the spiral of silence persists, but journalists who noticeably moderate comments have an effect. The

key to overcoming the spiral of silence is helping commenters feel part of a community with other forum participants.

#ISOJ, the official research journal of ISOJ,
vol. 6, issue 1, Spring 2016

The spiral of silence is claimed to impact people's willingness to talk about climate change. Research in America illustrates this phenomenon.

MEDIA AND AUDIENCE FRAMING

Framing theory developed from the agenda setting theory but introduced several significant developments, the most important of which are the roles of both audience agency and media organisations in influencing the ways media messages are framed.

Framing explains the relationship between audiences and the media. Framing is a continuous process, where the media and audiences interact with each other within society. The media frames events and stories, organising them into a package that audiences will understand. Audiences consume the media from their frame of understanding of the world and the role of the media in it. For communication to occur, there must be some overlap between the media's frames and those of the audience. Framing is built on the idea that the media and its audience, both living in the same society, share similar values and are dependent on each other.

Framing was developed to explain how news is gathered, constructed, distributed and read. It is understood today to be applicable to a range of media forms and texts, including narrative (indeed, framing theorists see the news as a form of narrative) and advertising.

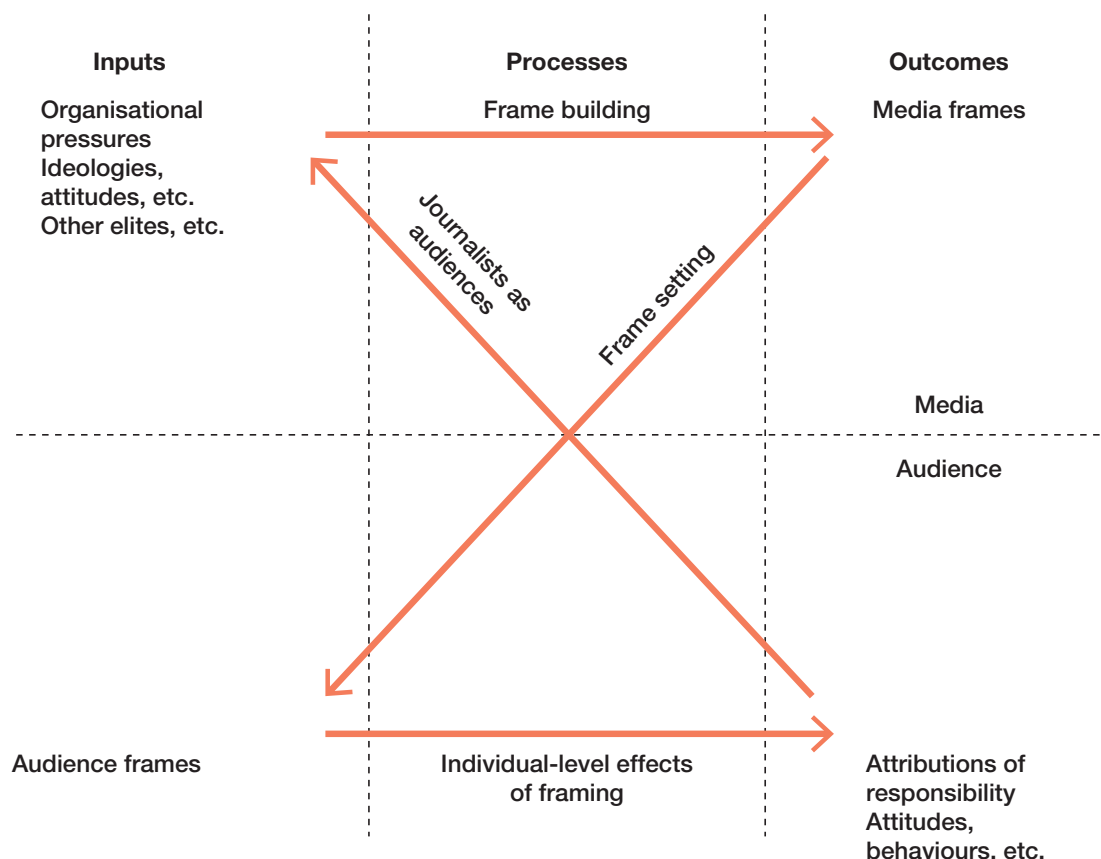


Figure 13.14 A process model of framing research. Source: Dietram A Scheufele, *Journal of Communications*, Winter 1999.

Framing occurs at four interconnected places within the communication process:

- communicator
- text
- receiver
- culture.

Journalists construct frames that structure and make sense of incoming information. These frames are based on ideology, attitudes, the source of information, the codes and conventions of the media form and the financial and management needs of the organisation that employs them.

Audiences read texts based on the frame of their values, experience and their understanding of a media text's form and purpose. Within each frame, some facts, opinions and values are considered more important than others. The media must think about the audience frame when constructing their products, or the audience will reject the text. For its part, the audience is usually aware of the social and organisational frame from which texts originate.

Framing is a neat way to accommodate a range of complex variables in the relationship between the media and its audiences. Both audience and media have agency. It is particularly useful in helping us understand how the commercial imperatives of media ownership and control may influence media texts.

Activity 13.10 Framing your life

The best way to understand audience framing is to apply it to a real-life situation.

Choose a media text that you and your classmates enjoy consuming, such as an advertising campaign, television show or even this textbook. Draw up a diagram like the one in Figure 13.14 and insert all the variables that may influence the production and consumption of this text for both the media producer and the audience.

You will see how the media frames its content and delivery for your demographic, and how your demographic influences the media to create products that will appeal to you.

HEGEMONY: CULTURAL IMPERIALISM

What is the influence of powerful countries, institutions and cultures on those with less power and what is the media's role?

We love our Disney movies, binge on the latest Netflix series, listen to Taylor Swift or Drake, play *Call of Duty* and can't get enough of the Kardashians. They fill our entertainment needs, challenge us and make us happy. Much of our media is not created in Australia, but we tend not to notice; that's just the way it is. But what is the effect of so much overseas content on the Australian way of life? How can audiences express their agency when selecting and consuming media if multinational media companies have mediated our world?

The willing domination of one social group by another. Hegemony is a ruling class's (or alliance's) domination of subordinate classes and groups through the elaboration and penetration of ideology (ideas and assumptions) into their common sense and everyday practice; it is the systematic (but not necessarily or even usually deliberate) engineering of mass consent to the established order. No hard and fast line can be drawn between the mechanisms of hegemony and the mechanisms of coercion ... In any given society, hegemony and coercion are interwoven.

Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching*, 1980

Cultural imperialism, described by Herb Schiller in 1973, is a view that Western nations dominate the media around the world, which has a powerful effect on developing nations by imposing Western views of the world on them, thus destroying their native cultures.

Developed countries produce the majority of the world's media because they have the money to do so. The rest of the world purchases these productions, consuming media filled with the Western world's lifestyles and thinking. Developing cultures then start to desire the same things and begin to emulate Western behaviours and beliefs. Over time, their own culture is devalued. Audiences become accustomed to consuming media that does not speak to their culture.

Cultural imperialism was initially described in terms of transmission from the developed world to the developing world, but it also occurs from the dominant culture of the United States to other developed countries. This phenomenon is sometimes termed the 'Disneyfication' of the world, but the process is not limited to Disney. Any multinational organisation can, through the media, exert a cultural influence in different markets. Think of the impact of Facebook and Twitter.

Cultural imperialism is not just for developing countries. Over half of the films screened in Australia every year are from America. Most of the rest are from overseas. Less than 10 per cent are Australian. It is likely that most of the texts you have studied for media over the past two years are from America. This situation suits audiences; after all, who doesn't like a great film, wherever it is from? But over the years cultural imperialism erodes our own culture and, when influenced by dominant cultures, our own begins to look and sound like that of the dominant ideology.

Cultural imperialism sounds very Big Brother, but it is usually all but invisible. Audiences willingly engage in media texts that gratify their desires. This process is called **hegemony**. In Australia, with its small population, it simply seems natural that we would supplement our media diet with texts from other countries. But is it? Many non-English-speaking countries produce most of their media content. This sense of naturalism may come from our common language.

Concern about the effect of cultural imperialism on Australian audiences and society is one of the arguments behind the rationale for regulating media in order to protect our industry and our culture. This is termed 'protecting the national interest'. However, cultural imperialism is likely to expand due to the

proliferation of online services such as Netflix and Stan, which are not subject to the Australian content quotas required of free-to-air television. Companies including Apple and Google also provide media content, and social media sites such as Facebook and Snapchat are getting into content provision, none of which is subject to Australian content rules. It is hard for Australian content providers to compete with so many well-funded globalised media institutions.

It is argued that globalisation is responsible for a loss of cultural diversity in the media. Herb Schiller contends that multinational media corporations are dominated by American companies that, having made a great deal of money out of the capitalist system, produce and distribute content that, consciously and unconsciously, supports this ideology. This process is like framing on a grand scale.

It would be incorrect, however, to accept that globalisation of the media always flows from ‘the West to the rest’. Digital technologies and the internet have seen the spread of media across cultures.

THE SO-COOL SITCOM IS ABOUT TO BE ‘SO FIVE MINUTES AGO’

Linguists and lexicographers of the American Dialect Society pooh-pooh suggestions that the language is being corrupted by television. ‘Popular television shows certainly spread fads and perhaps intensify them, or even initiate them,’ says Allan Metcalf, an English professor at MacMurray College in Illinois.

Most linguists believe that trendy words and phrases find their way into TV scripts after being noticed by scriptwriters, who in turn use them in shows, which become popular, thereby pushing slang into the vernacular. ‘People are affected linguistically by what they hear, especially on TV,’ says Ron Butters, a professor of

linguistics. ‘Hollywood tends to push the envelope but it doesn’t define it. It reflects what’s out there.’

The Age, 17 June 2004



Getty Images/TORU YAMANAKA/AFP

Figure 13.15 The ‘Disneyfication’ effect

Activity 13.11 Maintaining Aussie culture: are we ‘dreamin’?

Is the debate about the demise of Australian culture at the hands of US imperialism legitimate? It certainly has a long history.

Research the impact of US cultural practices and texts on Australian culture, and create an oral presentation for your class in which you discuss your findings.

AUDIENCE AGENCY IN COMMUNICATION THEORY

As we have seen so far, most of the history of communication theory has focused on the effects the media was claimed to have on audiences who were largely seen as powerless in the face of media influence over their lives. But this view became increasingly untenable in the latter part of the 20th century. The truth is much more complex. The time had come to put the audience at the centre of research.

Social **constructivism** argues that people learn about the world through a series of social filters, including dominant ideologies, and social and cultural constructs within their community. These filters determine how we interpret reality. Constructivist theories of media influence centre on the idea that both the media and its audiences make meaning through the ways in which they frame and interpret the world and representations of it. Society's discourses are conducted through interaction between the media and its audiences to construct and maintain a view of the way things are or should be.

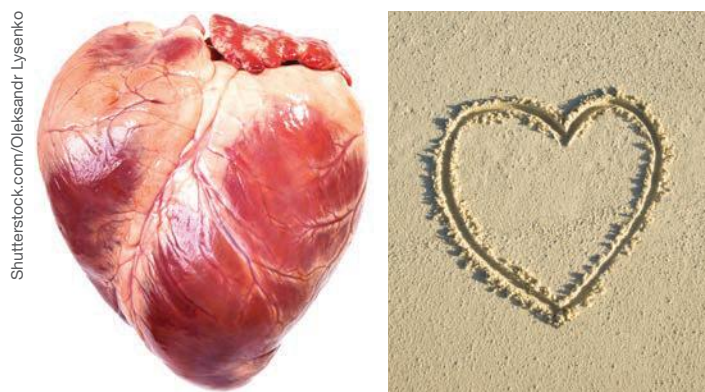


Figure 13.16 We are all semioticians every day.

Semiotics

Semiotics is the theory of signs. Signs are important because they communicate meaning. Signs mean something other than themselves, and semiotics explores how people construct and determine meaning using words, sounds and images. Semiotics helps us understand how a heart, for example, can mean different things at different times. A heart can mean a heart, or love, or being alive. We all interpret signs every day. You are doing so now as you read the words and images in this book.

Semiotics began in the late 19th century with Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, and was further developed throughout the 20th century by linguists and philosophers,

including CS Pierce, Umberto Eco, Roland Barthes and Claude Lévi-Strauss. Semiotic analysis grew out of structuralism (which held that large-scale systems could be better understood by examining the smallest parts of their structure) and linguistics.

The basic tenet of semiotics as applied to the study of the media is that media texts are not reflections of the world, but constructions of it. The audience negotiates the meaning of these constructions through a shared ideology; that is, the system of embedded values and beliefs under which most members of a society work. Thus, studying the meaning of media messages can reveal the underlying ideology of the culture in which they were built.

Semiotics began as the study of language but is applied to all communication, which it sees as an ordered system of signs. Meanings are determined through cultural conventions using codes (hence the media term 'codes and conventions'). Values are embedded in these codes, and are used to draw distinctions between those things a culture considers important and those that it considers less important. Semiotics is, therefore, concerned with:

- signs
- the codes and systems into which signs are organised within a culture
- the culture in which signs operate, which holds a shared meaning of signs and the codes and systems that construct them.

A sign is anything that stands for something else to produce meaning. It consists of the signifier (something we hear, see, touch, taste or smell) plus the signified (the meaning associated with the signifier).

The two images of the heart in Figure 13.16 are both signifiers; that is, they are things that can be seen, and signs that have symbolic meanings.

Roland Barthes took the study of semiotics further when he argued that there are three levels of **signification**, the process of production, exchange and making meaning from signs:

- **Denotation** is the literal meaning of the thing itself. The image on the left denotes a human heart; the image on the right denotes a symbol of a heart drawn on sand.
- **Connotation** is what the sign means metaphorically or symbolically. The connotation of these images could range from health to love, or they could connote any other meaning the reader assigns to them, given their understanding of the codes and conventions of symbolic meaning.

- Mythical signification (sometimes called 'ideological signification') depends on shared cultural beliefs and values within society. The image on the right above mythically symbolises that love is the best emotion of all.

The connotative and mythical readings of signs are culturally specific; that is, they may vary in different cultures and at different times.

Semiotics can be complex and at times controversial, but for VCE Media it is enough to know that it exists and that it underpins our study of representation, text study and the interrelationship between the media and its audiences.

Postmodernity, postmodernism and agency

In recent years, communication theory has been informed by the proliferation of new media technologies, globalisation and consumer culture. These often contradictory strands place the audience at the centre of the communication process – the audience is seen to have agency within the communication process as they negotiate the meaning of multiple messages acquired from multiple texts in a multitude of media forms within the framework of social discourses.

Postmodernism is the philosophy at the heart of the relationship between audiences and the media they consume. Much like this area of study, there is not one true meaning of any text. Instead, audience members are thought to make individual meanings of media texts that will vary according to their experience, understanding, expectation and values. These meanings may change as the audience and the discourse change over time.

Postmodern approaches to media reject the distinction between **high culture** and **popular culture**. Genre boundaries are broken and remade in an eclectic and playful manner, mixing ideas and forms. Similarly, postmodernism promotes parody, irony and playfulness. Postmodernism sees ideas, approaches, techniques and artifacts from a range of media forms and texts combined with elements from other arts and cultural forms to make new and individual meanings.

While postmodernism may at first seem like a 'choose your own adventure' or even a wishy-washy cop-out where anything goes, it is much more complex. If you are interested in finding out more about postmodernism, you can follow the link to the article 'Explainer: what is postmodernism?' by Daniel Palmer, Senior Lecturer, Art History & Theory Program, Monash University.

Postmodernism goes a long way to explaining the debate about the value of emerging media texts such as controversial reality TV programs. Is *First Dates* an embarrassing cultural spectacle symbolising the end of good taste or a valuable social developmental tool against which the audience can test their values? Could it be a brave social experiment, or a simple and cynical marketing exercise? Or is it just good fun? In a postmodern world, you decide – and you may change your mind, as long as you can support your opinion.



Weblink



courtesy of Nine Network

Figure 13.17 The end of civilisation as we know it or instructional video?

RECEPTION AND CULTURE

Reception theory is about the audience and their agency. Reception analysis is all about the meanings the audience constructs from the media and the cultural framework in which they do so. It sees the audience as active and engaged in their media choices and use, but with a few strings attached.

Most of the theories that came before reception analysis were developed in America and were based on the effects model – media content was believed to have measurable effects on audiences. Reception theorists reject this behaviourist cause-and-effect model as too narrowly focused to provide answers to the bigger questions around the relationship between audiences and the media.

Reception theory was developed in the 1980s and 1990s by Stuart Hall, a British cultural theorist who worked at the influential Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, also known as the Birmingham School. Up until this time, British media theory was based on the political economy model – the media was assumed to serve the needs of the rich and powerful. Reception analysis took this idea and developed it

into what came to be known as the cultural model – the audience's relationship with the media is situated within a culture, and to understand it we need to study the audience and the culture together.

Reception analysis is less concerned with what happens between the media and audiences than how and why. For example, media effects researchers might measure the effect that video games have on gamers' behaviour or attitudes, while reception analysis is interested in how gamers read their game, why they play, and how the particular social, political and economic context in which they play impacts on their play.

Reception theory holds that the media are powerful ideological tools that serve to maintain the dominance of those in power but audiences have varying degrees of agency which they use to make sense of media messages.

Media organisations consciously or unconsciously construct their products using symbolic codes and conventions, called the 'politics of signification', that communicate meanings allied to their commercial and political interests. While these messages may be read by audiences in ways other than those intended by producers, they are always read within the social, economic and political context of the society in which they are distributed.

Encoding/decoding messages

Hall's approach draws on semiotics, where the meanings of media texts are always open, polysemic (have multiple meanings) and are interpreted according to the context and culture of the audience. Meaning, therefore, lies somewhere between that framed or encoded by the producer of a text (termed the 'preferred reading') and that decoded by the audience.

Audiences negotiate meaning in one of three ways. They may choose to:

- accept all of the message, which is termed a 'dominant or hegemonic reading' of the text
- accept part of the message, which is called a 'negotiated reading' of the text
- reject the meaning, which is termed an 'oppositional reading' of the text.

Readings will vary, are open to change and depend on the social and cultural background of the audience and the context of the media experience.

Hall emphasised that the negotiation of meaning was not conducted between equals because the media, as an instrument of hegemony, has more power.

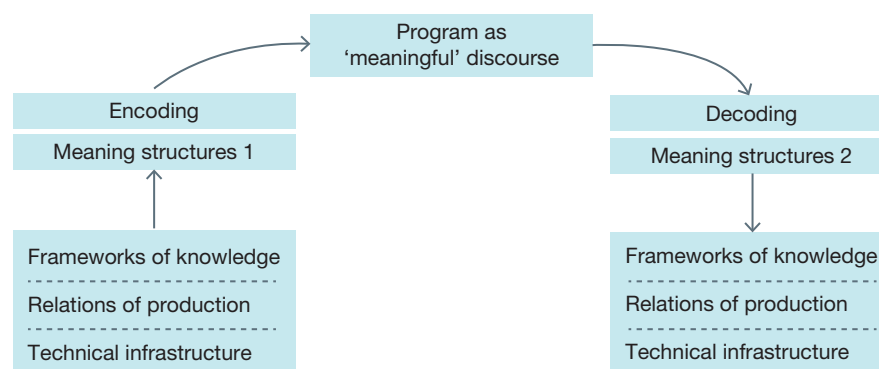


Figure 13.18 Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model

Reception studies has enjoyed much popularity in recent years, as new media technologies have played some part in redressing the imbalance of power between the media and its audiences. These technologies have allowed – to a greater or lesser degree – audiences to resist or subvert mass media corporate models of communication, as the research reported below illustrates. The technological divide between those with new media and those without is still great, but access increases as the cost of technology decreases. In terms of reception studies, convergent and collaborative media technologies have seen the rise of media outlets by and for groups that were once marginalised or ignored entirely by the commercial constraints of mainstream media.

All the repetition and incantation of the sanitised term information, with its cleansing cybernetic properties, cannot wash away or obliterate the fundamentally dirty, semiotic, semantic, discursive character of the media in their cultural dimensions.

Stuart Hall, cultural theorist

GREED, WAR, HOPE, LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP: CONTEMPORARY STRUCTURES OF FEELING AND THE AUDIENCE'S READINGS OF BROADER THEMES IN *THE HOBBIT*

Brigitte Hipfl,
University of Klagenfurt, Austria
Jasmin Kulterer,
University of Salzburg, Austria

ABSTRACT

This article presents the results of an analysis of the ways in which German speaking respondents to the World Hobbit questionnaire relate *The Hobbit* films to broader social issues.

The answers to the corresponding open question show that viewers find multiple ways to link the movies, its contents and messages, but also aspects of their production to current social problems and developments. By using Raymond Williams' concept of 'structure of feeling', we are able to illustrate that the personal reactions to *The Hobbit* often bear traces of collective expectations and feelings, and what prevails as common sense under historic-specific

conditions. The key themes that emerged in the analysis are the enticements and problems of capitalism, the binary of war and destruction on one side and community, love and friendship on the other, as well as the complex of the individual's potentials and how this relates to the dominant social discourse of neo-liberalism.

Participations, vol. 13, edition 2,
November 2016

Activity 13.12 Reception theory in practice

Choose a popular but controversial media text and research its reception among friends and family. Try to find a range of views about what the text means. Reality and lifestyle media texts are perfect for this activity.

- 1 What is the preferred meaning encoded by the producer of the text?
- 2 What meanings have your subjects made of the text?
 - a Are these meanings preferred, negotiated or oppositional?
 - b How do the backgrounds of your subjects influence their reading of the text?
- 3 Some of your subjects will not have consumed the text you are studying, but this may not stop them from expressing an opinion.
 - a To what do you attribute this?
 - b Ask them to experience the text and interview them again afterwards. Have their readings changed? Why?

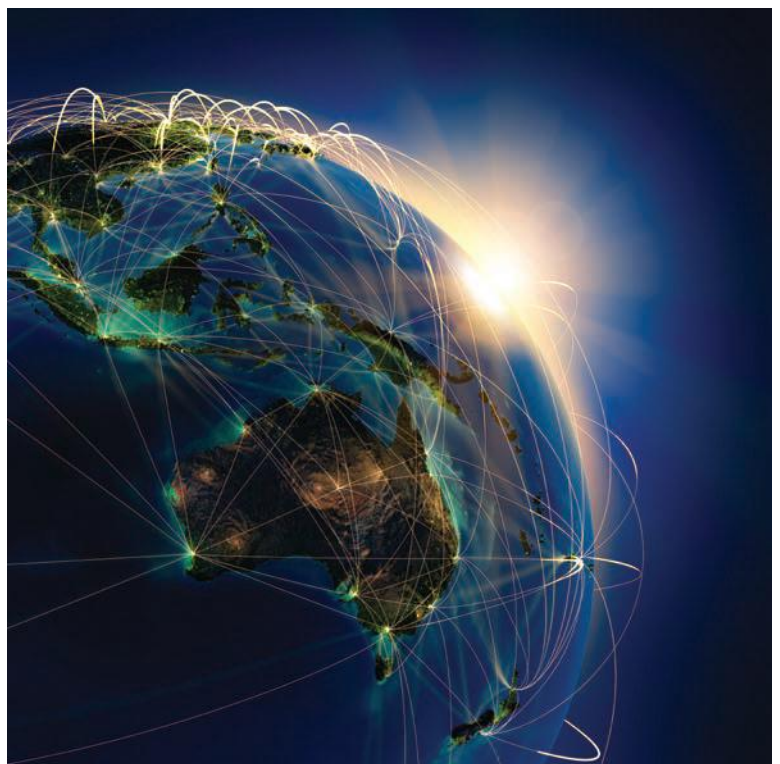
COMMUNICATION THEORY IN THE 21ST CENTURY: AUDIENCE AGENCY AT LAST?

The ideavirus

Have you seen the YouTube clip where an iPhone is destroyed in a blender? Can he blend it? Yes he can! How did you hear about the clip? Someone told you.

Viral marketing began in 1997 with Hotmail's decision to promote itself on every email sent. Since then, the ideavirus has been used to promote everything from internet services to product promotion and less commercial messages, such as the anti-war movement and community service campaigns.

Created and/or marketed by Seth Godin, the ideavirus is a development of the two-step flow model, and is based on the concept of individuals communicating with one another to spread a message – what we would once have called 'word of mouth', but which Godin terms 'word of mouse'. Godin's view is that once the media



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marketed products to audiences, then ideas to audiences; now audiences promote ideas to each other. Rather like a stone tossed into a pond, the ideavirus is a communication theory that needed the speed and ease of the internet to be successful. Godin coins the term ‘sneezers’ – the individuals we once knew as nerds, or early adopters – as the beginning of an ideavirus.

In recent years, viral communication has soared as technologies including Twitter, Facebook and Snapchat have taken off. Think about the links, videos or images you share with your mates. If you have ever forwarded an internet meme, you have demonstrated the ideavirus in action. Want to know more? Godin released his book *Unleashing the Ideavirus* online with the instruction to ‘Steal this idea!’ There are many online resources you can use to learn more about ideaviruses.

Activity 13.13 Viral marketing: are you a sneezer, or have you been infected?

- 1 Think about the things you learnt about from friends and colleagues, on the internet or via your phone. How many of these were viral marketing at work?
- 2 If you were to promote an idea, product or service using the internet, how would you go about it? What aspect of viral marketing or any other communication theory would you need to take into account?
- 3 Create an illustrated poster or infographic that illustrates your reflection.



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SPREADABLE AND STICKABLE MEDIA

This recent communication theory was devised by Professor Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford and Joshua Green and detailed in their 2013 book *Spreadable Media*.

Spreadable and stickable media builds on the two-step and multistep flow tradition of communication theory, uses and gratifications theory, reception studies and Seth Godin’s ideavirus. It was developed to explain the relationship between media and audiences in a world where media content is no longer exclusively created and distributed by media organisations but is also created and circulated by individuals. Jenkins and colleagues wanted to explain how and why media is shared between formal and informal networks. The key question this theory seeks to answer is why some messages stick while other messages don’t.

Jenkins and colleagues argue that if it doesn’t spread it’s dead. The theory is based on the idea that people share content that engages them. Engagement can come in many forms: amusement, learning, content that fits our values or that we think our online friends will like. The theory is built on the belief that engaging online friends is a socially valuable activity that both senders and receivers of media use to build and maintain relationships. We all send images, memes, news, political, personal and social posts with the aim of engaging our audience (online friends and contacts). Positive appraisal in the form of likes, comments or reposts is a form of relationship building.

What makes content stick and why do we spread it?

Sticky media is engaging media and therefore successful media. In an online world, engagement is everything. If a message sticks, audiences are more likely to share it. The theory asserts that spreading media involves a series of socially embedded decisions including: Is the content engaging and worth sharing? Will it interest the people I am sending it to? What will the content say about me or my relationship with these people? Which platform should I use? Should I attach a message and, if I don’t, will they get it?

We do not share all the material that comes into our feed. We actively curate it, selecting content for individuals and groups. Sometimes we choose not to share; at other times, we maintain groups with which we share selected content only. There can be many reasons for this. What might be suitable for your friends may not be great for your mum to see. Sometimes we may engage in the spiral of silence when we choose not to share something that sticks with us but may damage our relationships with others.

Spreadable media is polysemic; like much online content, meanings are contextual and depend on how the audience reads them. Meaning is constructed within the context of the relationship between sender and audience. We share because we want to maintain relationships. Memes are a very good example of this. The continued popularity of memes such as 'One does not simply ...', 'Tell me again ...' and 'What if I told you ...' is because they are used to construct new meanings, bringing creativity, semiotics and playful postmodernity to engaging user-generated content.

Sticky relationships are not just personal

Spreadable and stickable media can be used to explain sharing between online friends and fan groups but is also extremely valuable to companies that use online globalised media institutions such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Snapchat to build brands and markets. Companies and celebrities use the principles of spreadable and stickable media through their online presence or through the use of social media 'influencers' to build a profile among potential customers. Commercial social media techniques include offering rewards for likes, posting beautiful or funny images and videos of products and allowing the public to post images or videos to a page. This practice builds a relationship between companies and their followers, allowing followers to participate in their brand and contribute to brand culture while feeling part of it. Companies have to tread a very fine line, though; authenticity of the message is important to social media users, who hate being 'used' for profit.

Spreadable and stickable media can only occur today because of the communicative possibilities of the internet. These technologies changed the dynamics of the relationship between commercial and media organisations and their audiences, creating new modes of production, distribution and consumption. Audiences can now connect in ways that were not possible until very recently, which has left many traditional media organisations struggling to play in this space, with more or less success.

As you learnt in Chapter 8, we receive much, if not most, of our news these days through our social media feeds, often shared by our friends. This can lead to a filter bubble where you only see content that matches your world view. Producers strive to create content that is shareable and offers a new perspective or challenges existing world views, as can be the case for political or social commentary. For example, left-leaning online newspaper *The Guardian* publishes content that it calls 'Burst your Bubble ... a weekly guide to conservative articles worth reading to expand your thinking'. Handy social media and email share links are, of course, provided.

Check out how many organisations you 'like' or 'follow' and note how many products feature in your social media feeds to see how spreadable and stickable media works.

Sharing content is often described as 'viral' media, but the term 'virus' has negative connotations. Spreadable and stickable media goes further, it explains why our engagement with and sharing of content is not due to illness but because we actively choose to build relationships, to share in a participatory culture.



Figure 13.19 Media organisations provide the means for sharing.

Activity 13.14 Spreadable and stickable media in your feed

Examine your social media feeds over the past week and choose a topic or post that has stuck with your friends and has been shared many times. Analyse this item or topic to determine what made it stick and why people shared it.

Ask your parents if you can analyse their feeds. What do the similarities and differences reveal about spreadable and stickable media?

AGENCY AND CONTROL IN AN ONLINE WORLD

The internet has changed everything. For the first time in history, audiences can not only access media from around the world, they can also create and publish media content without regard for the commercial and cultural factors that used to drive the media. Sharing technologies – including networked databased media forms such as social media and torrenting sites – allow users to access, create, appropriate and publish media anytime, anywhere.

Audiences can now exert more agency in their media use than ever before. But should they? Issues such as intellectual property rights, privacy, legal controls over media content and the financial and the ethical rights and responsibilities of both audiences and the media must now be considered in a different light. If audiences can now access everything, do they? Should they? And what can we do to protect vulnerable audiences?

With the complexity of modern media and so much to choose from, is it possible to determine how, when and under what circumstances the media influences its audiences? It seems that wherever we turn there is another media moral panic predicting the end of the world as we know it, or a new piece of research that contradicts something that has gone before. In a postmodern world, can there ever be one truth? Well, yes ... and no.

It is not possible to fully understand how all media operates in today's society. We can deduce patterns and developments, but there are a number of factors that inhibit our ability to know and to evaluate the role the media forms in society. These include the complex and intertwined ownership of media companies and the popularity and power of media organisations, including social media, that are privately owned and operate globally. These organisations fiercely guard their commercial privacy in order to gain or maintain a competitive advantage over other organisations but operate with few of the legal constraints under which traditional media have been required to comply since their inception. It seems that these organisations are now too big and have spread so widely that they have outgrown legislative control. If multinational media organisations can't be controlled, what does this mean for audience agency? Is it an illusion dressed up as engagement?

Throughout the 20th century, each new media form was distrusted. However, media such as the press and television were also considered powerful and, if well managed, a force for public good in the societies in which they operated. To reinforce this, they were subject to control in the form of legal constraints on their operation, which were administered differently in each country in which they operated. In Australia, for example, this meant that there were limitations on the extent of media ownership, on content and on who could consume particular media texts.

Today, many media organisations operate multinationally and the measures that were once successful in controlling them are either inoperable or irrelevant in this environment.

While we cannot know everything about the media and its audiences, we can examine the media and particular topics within it from a range of perspectives. Contemporary media theory synthesises a range of views into what James Lull, Professor Emeritus of Communication Studies at San Jose State University, describes as 'three zones of indeterminacy':

- 1 Diverse institutions: how can the ordinary person know about the institutions that control their media?
- 2 Technology that becomes ultimately unmanageable as it proliferates and moves into the hands of the public: user-generated content.
- 3 Polysemic messages: diverse messages open to multiple interpretations by different readers.

Lull does not mean by this that there are as many readings of media texts as there are audiences. This view – popular among early semioticians and cultural theorists – is today considered flawed, because with the concentration of media ownership in the hands of fewer multinational owners, audiences are less likely to be exposed to alternative points of view and are therefore less able to resist or evade dominant ideological and cultural forces. Rather, Lull points to these areas as locations of influence, but for which the degree of influence is not possible to determine.

Making meaning from the media

How can we think about the relationship between audiences and the media when it appears that almost our entire lives are mediated? Even media commentary is mediated, as this cartoon demonstrates. How can we test the authority of media commentators and claims about media influence? One way is to apply your knowledge of the communication theories you have studied to each debate.



USING COMMUNICATION THEORIES

Having studied several communication theories, it is now time to apply them to arguments about particular media and their claimed effect on audiences. This process will provide you with evidence to determine the degree of agency and control the media and audiences exercise.

Activity 13.15 Applying communication theory in the real world

- 1 Analyse your reading of the cartoon above in terms of the media theories you have studied. It is clear that not all theories will be able to demonstrate how gamers engage with their games, so choose those that you think are relevant.
 - How does your gender, age and whether or not you are a gamer affect your reading of the cartoon?
 - Don't forget that the reception context may affect your reading. You are analysing the cartoon in class, not reading it for relaxation.
- 2 Research a controversial topic, such as violence or sexual material in the media, the impact of social media, advertising, propaganda, trolling or representations of body. Collect media texts and commentary that express a range of points of view. Analyse each opinion in terms of the communication theories you have studied.
 - a How can theories be used to explain the balance between power and agency for audiences and the media?
 - b What are the strengths and weaknesses of each theory in relation to your topic?
 - c What further information do you need in order to determine the facts in the topic you are studying?

AUDIENCES

All arguments about agency and control in the media are underpinned by the notion of audience. In fact, everything you have studied and every product you have made over the past two years has had an understanding of audience as its starting point. But what do we mean by the term 'audience'?

Originally the term 'audience' meant a group – the people consuming the mass media, such as cinema patrons. Audiences of print media were termed 'readers'. Today this terminology remains relevant, but we also think of an audience as an individual – someone watching, listening, playing or reading alone. They may be physically alone, but they are unlikely to be the only person consuming a

media text. In addition, this person might be consuming multiple media texts in different media forms while creating media at the same time. The student who is simultaneously watching TV, surfing the net, chatting on Facebook and reading a textbook is part of multiple audiences, while at the same time being what Professor Axel Bruns from the University of Queensland terms a 'produser' (see page 186).

Media audiences are characterised not only by their numbers, but also by their membership or affiliation with other groups, including gender, race, demographic, education, age, taste, experience and so on. Each of these impact on the way audiences select, consume, read and create media.

The orientation and degree of attention to a text are also important aspects of audience study. Are the audience paying close attention? Are they snogging in the back row of the cinema, or at a sleepover with a group of friends? Perhaps they are a reluctant audience trapped in front of an educational video. The reception context of media use is important when determining the relationship between the media and its audiences. Audience experience and their understanding of a media text or form are considerations media researchers and commentators must take into account.



Figure 13.20 They are all reading the text the same way. It is not how an audience looks but what they are thinking that counts.

The so-called passive audience

Originally intended to describe the unquestioned acceptance of media messages, the term 'passive' has often been used erroneously to describe audience behaviour. Audiences quietly consuming media texts were said to be passive; their demeanour mistakenly taken as an indicator of acceptance of the media message. How many times have you been accused of veging out in front of the box? You might have been veging out, you may even have been asleep, but you certainly weren't passive. The fact is, there is no such thing as a passive audience! Even audiences who are not paying attention to a text are not passive about it – they are choosing not to pay attention. Think about how the uses and gratifications theory or any theory that came after it would characterise so-called passive audience.

All audiences are active

Today's social, economic and textual interpretation of the media is much more sophisticated; audiences are understood to be actively making meaning from their texts. While the community still holds the view that some audiences are more susceptible to media influence than others, our understanding of the notion of susceptibility is tempered by our understanding of the context in which media texts are consumed. Yes, audiences are influenced by the media, but that doesn't mean that they are not active in making meanings of their media texts. The relationship between the media and its audiences is much more dynamic.

The audience is dead, long live the audience

Some argue that the idea of a mass media audience is dead, that interactive digital media forms have made the idea of one audience redundant. Certainly, the collaborative nature of new media technologies has dramatically altered the way media producers and users think about audience (see Chapter 8 for

an explanation of new media audiences). However, the term 'audience' is a useful description for the following media organisations and stakeholder groups:

- media institutions such as those who produce and distribute media and who may wish to profit from their work, including media proprietors, advertising agencies, public opinion and ratings organisations
- students of media such as academics and publishers in fields as diverse as cultural studies, politics, technology and marketing, who explore or comment on the relationship between the media and its audiences
- regulatory bodies such as government departments and industry self-regulatory bodies that control what audiences may consume; these include the Australian Communications and Media Authority, the Australian Classification Board, International Age Ratings Coalition, Free TV, and the Advertising Standards Board
- stakeholder groups who have particular views about the media and its claimed impact on audiences; these include political lobby groups, experts in children (such as the Australian Children's Television Foundation and the Australian Council on Children and the Media), Electronic Frontiers Australia, the Australian Association of National Advertisers and the Interactive Games and Entertainment Association.



Weblink

The third-person effect

Why do we worry about the effect of the media on others but think that we are immune or untouched? Research indicates that individuals overestimate the effect of the media on the beliefs, attitudes and behaviour of others but underestimate these effects on themselves. Could the third-person effect – first described by Tyler and Cook in 1984 – explain why we consider some audiences vulnerable but rarely admit this vulnerability in ourselves?

The third-person effect has profound ramifications for discussing the relationship between the media and audiences. One issue is the possible impact of the third-person effect on the formulation of media regulation, from industry codes of practice to government legislation through to self-regulation in the interests of protecting audiences. Some organisations, such as the Classification Board, conduct regular research to ascertain the accuracy of the classification code for consumers; but for others – particularly those stakeholders with a negative view about the media – the third-person effect is simply part of the way some people think; they are unaware of its impact on themselves. Follow the weblink to an excerpt from *You Are Not So Smart* by David McRaney.

In recent years, the third-person effect has also been a useful frame for researching online media use, including social media and gaming. These research papers make interesting reading:

- 'Third person effect and gender in online gaming' by Lin Zhang
- 'Facebook, the third-person effect, and the differential impact hypothesis' by Valarie Schweisberger, Jennifer Billinson and T Makana Chock
- 'Me versus them: Third-person effects among Facebook users' by Mina Tsay-Vogel.



Weblink

THE THIRD-PERSON EFFECT: PERCEPTIONS OF THE MEDIA'S INFLUENCE AND IMMORAL CONSEQUENCES

Michael B Salwen, Michel Dupagne
First published October 1, 1999

ABSTRACT

A nationwide telephone survey of 721 adults examined the impact of the third-person effect on individuals' perceptions of the media's general influence and immorality effects with three issues. The third-person effect perceptual hypothesis predicts that individuals will perceive media messages to have greater effects

on other people than on themselves. A behavioral hypothesis predicts that third-person perception (i.e., seeing others as more influenced) will lead to support for restrictions on media messages. The findings reaffirmed robust support for the perceptual hypothesis. Regarding the behavioral hypothesis, effect perceptions were found to be issue dependent. For television violence, the issue with the clearest moral dimension, perceived

immorality effects predicted support for restrictions. In contrast, perception of the media's general influence was a key predictor of support for restrictions on televised trials and negative political advertising. The failure of past research to distinguish dimensions of perceived effects may account for the less than robust findings regarding the behavioral hypothesis.

Communications Research, vol. 26, issue 5, 1999

As a class, reflect on your media use and that of your family and friends in terms of claims that a media form or text might have more influence on one person or group than another.

- ## Some audiences are argued to be more susceptible than others

As each new media technology arrives, the target audience for these technologies is claimed to be at greatest risk. Over the years, susceptibility has been variously attributed to men (propaganda, violence and pornography), women (daytime TV and advertising), the mentally unstable (violence), heavy users (cultivation of attitudes and advertising), and of course children, who have been claimed to be susceptible to anything and everything. One only has to take a look at this list to see how inaccurate, unproven and populist such attributions can be. But what is behind these claims?

One of society's values is that we should protect those who are thought to be unable to protect themselves. Children are the main focus of concern because we hold the belief that they are innocent, in need of protection from the harsh 'realities' of the media. It is assumed that children do not have sufficient understanding of the media to differentiate between fact and fiction.



Take the real-life example above. Did young Thomas think he was a tank engine? Certainly not – the program was one of his favourites and he knew every episode off by heart. In this instance, Thomas was simply trying out a new language pattern, not mindlessly copying his favourite show. He was not a passive consumer, nor was he unable to understand the codes and conventions of televised animation. His response can be read as an interplay between the text, the context of his viewing (including his experience and his relationship with those in the room with him) and his idea of play.

This example illustrates the minefield of issues related to children and the media. How can we know what sense children make of their media? They may not have the language to explain their understanding, or they may simply provide the response an adult researcher is looking for.

Evidence about children: choose your own adventure

In our efforts to protect children from harm, there have been many claims about the impact of the media on children. Often these claims are based more on society's fears than on evidence. They are examples of the third-person effect; because children have less life experience, they are assumed not to know what adults know about the media. This is true, but so often the claims made about the media, and especially new media, are negative.

When studying the relationship between the media and children, researchers consider the cognitive and social development of the child, the context in which the media is consumed, the child's experience, and the contexts of family and school. The amount and type of media children use may also have an impact.

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

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

Douglas Adams, *The Salmon of Doubt*, Random House LLC, p. 111

Like all of us, researchers are subject to bias. One of these biases is that new media is more harmful than the media with which the researcher is familiar. That is why so much research over the past 20 years has been on gaming. In the past 10 years, the focus has shifted to the internet and mobile phones, and more recently social media. Can you predict the next wave of research? What is the fear it will address?

Activity 13.17 'Back in the day' stories: true or false?

The media (and parents) love to point out how life 'then' was better and made them into better people. Is it true? Nup. Will you do it too? Probably. The listicle '12 Reasons Growing Up With '90s Technology Made Us Better Adults Today' is typical of such 'good old days' press coverage.

Create your own listicle (with illustrative GIFs if you like) that illustrates why growing up now is better than in the olden days.



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There have been thousands of studies into the relationship between children and the media. It is a highly contested space and the results are contradictory. You can literally choose your own adventure as you find a study that fits your beliefs. But where does this leave Media students? One way forward is to examine the arguments and evidence for particular claims.

IS IT TRUE THAT CHILDREN CAN'T TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FANTASY AND REALITY?

This belief is one of the oldest and most enduring claims about children and the media. There are several issues to be addressed in an attempt to find the answer, including:

- Children develop at different rates, which will be reflected in results, as will their experience in the media form being researched.
- Most of the research in this area has been conducted on small samples under laboratory conditions, which does not match the way media is consumed in real-world settings.
- Much of the research in this area occurs before children are literate, therefore relying on language skills that do not match their conceptual skills. They understand long before they can explain the nature of their understanding. The ability to differentiate between fantasy and reality typically occurs at around the ages of three or four years. However, one study showed that children could not consistently explain their understanding until they were around 11 years of age.



- Children's classification of content may not match that of researchers. Children may not share the same understanding of language. One researcher found that some children confused questions about reality with liking a television program.
- Children's understanding of fantasy and reality are contextual; they may be able to distinguish between the two in some genres but not others.
- Children are likely to give researchers the responses they think will please them.

The abstract below is from an excellent article that brings together recent research in this area.

REVISITING THE FANTASY–REALITY DISTINCTION: CHILDREN AS NAÏVE SKEPTICS

Jacqueline D Woolley and Maliki Ghossainy
Far from being the uncritical believers young children have been portrayed as, children often exhibit skepticism toward the reality status of novel entities and events. This paper reviews research on children's reality status judgments, testimony use, understanding

of possibility, and religious cognition. When viewed from this new perspective it becomes apparent that, when assessing reality status, children are as likely to doubt as they are to believe. It is suggested that immature metacognitive abilities are at the root of children's skepticism, specifically that an insufficient

ability to evaluate the scope and relevance of one's knowledge leads to an over-reliance on it in evaluating reality status. With development comes increasing ability to utilize a wider range of sources to inform reality status judgments.

Child Development, September 2013

Some good news about children and the media

How did *Sesame Street* get started and why is it so enduring? *Sesame Street* is loved the world over and is a very good example of the positive effect of media use by children. You probably watched it as a child and if you close your eyes you can transport yourself back to your favourite characters and even sing the theme. Why not watch the updated version? Go on, you know you want to. It is brought to you by the letter M for Media and you can find it online.



Getty Images/WAKIL KOHSAR/AFP

Figure 13.22 *Sesame Street* continues to educate today. Meet Zari, Afghanistan's first female Muppet.

The following is a report of recommendations as to possible uses of open-circuit television to stimulate the intellectual and cultural growth in children of preschool age. The report is based on a four-month survey of opinions of leading cognitive psychologists and educators in the field of preschool education, as well as of television producers, film makers and other specialists in the field of children's entertainment. It draws also from extensive research into old and new visual material that could be used or adapted for use on television.

The above extract is taken from the opening of Joan Ganz Cooney's groundbreaking 1966 report *The Potential Uses of Television in Preschool Education*, in which she recommended the development of a TV series to foster intellectual and cultural development in preschoolers. This report became the foundation of the Children's Television Workshop, and the program became *Sesame Street*.

There is a great deal of research-based evidence to support the prosocial and educative effect of *Sesame Street* on young viewers. Sesame Workshop uses the model 'Inform, improve, measure ... repeat' to analyse the effectiveness of its programming. You can read the original report and details of continuing *Sesame Street* initiatives, including over 1000 research reports, by searching their work at Sesame Workshop.



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EFFECTS OF 'SESAME STREET': A META-ANALYSIS OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING IN 15 COUNTRIES

Mares, Marie-Louise; Pan, Zhongdang
'Sesame Street' is broadcast to millions of children globally, including in some of the world's poorest regions. This meta-analysis examines the effects of children's exposure to international co-productions of 'Sesame Street', synthesizing the results of 24 studies, conducted with over 10 000 children

in 15 countries. The results indicated significant positive effects of exposure to the program, aggregated across learning outcomes, and within each of the three outcome categories: cognitive outcomes, including literacy and numeracy; learning about the world, including health and safety knowledge; social reasoning and attitudes toward out-groups. The effects

were significant across different methods, and they were observed in both low- and middle-income countries and also in high-income countries. The results are contextualized by considering the effects and reach of the program, relative to other early childhood interventions.

Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology,
vol. 34, no. 3, pp. 140–51, May–June 2013

Activity 13.18 Exactly what does *Sesame Street* teach children?

Go to Sesame Workshop online and find an example of the research that intrigues you. Write a brief report that outlines the findings. What does it reveal about the nature of influence and of children's agency?

Create a class blog or Google document where everyone shares what they have found. You will be able to use this when asked about arguments and evidence about the use of contemporary media by audiences.

And now for some bad news ...

If, as the *Sesame Street* research claims, children do learn prosocial and educational material from television, can they also learn bad things? Well, it depends on what you mean by 'bad', and on all the contextual factors in the child's life. The list of adverse effects of media use by children is long, as any Google search will show. They include delayed cognitive development, poorer language skills, inability to concentrate, poor play skills, obesity, poor relationship-building skills, propensity to violence, increased bullying behaviours, poor motor skills, early sexualisation, copycat behaviour and fear. However, the research is often contradictory or focused on specific topics or small groups of subjects.

Most of the research in this area comes from America and is in line with the effects model, which generally does not take contextual factors in children's lives into account. If you would like to see some research in this vein, try the Australian Council on Children and the Media research pages, where you will find contradictory answers to every question you could ask.



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What do the experts say?

There are no Australian federal government guidelines for screen use by children. Several States have issued guidelines; however, these are not primarily about media use but are based on healthy activity and exercise. Most recommendations by health organisations and stakeholder groups are based on those issued by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).

In 2016 the AAP announced a significant change to its guidelines on screen time for children. Previously this organisation had taken the view that children should have as little screen time as possible, and none for children under two years of age.



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The new guidelines take what the AAP calls a 'nuanced' approach. Here is a summary:

- Under 18 months: no screen time at all except video chatting.
- From ages 2–5: one hour per day of high-quality programs, such as *Sesame Street*. Parents should watch with children to help them understand what they are seeing and apply it to their world.
- 6–12 years: 12.5 hours per week.
- 13–18 years: 14 hours per week.
- For all ages: consistently limit time using media and types of media. Ensure other healthy behaviours.
- All families: designate media-free times and places. Discuss online safety and citizenship. Turn off media when not in use. Create a personalised family media plan.

Think about the lifestyle, work and education commitments of your family and friends. How do they use the media? Do you think these guidelines are realistic in today's world? How does your family decide on media use?

There are plenty of online resources that are useful for studying the relationship between children and the media. Some of these will be useful:

- ACMA research snapshot Aussie Teens and Kids Online
- PEW Internet Teens and Technology
- OFCOM Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report.



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Activity 13.19 Everyone has an opinion, but not everyone can be right: evaluating online reports about children's use of the media

Parents typically google when they have a parenting issue. The results, like the research, are far from consistent. Here are a few online articles about children's media use, which have been chosen because they are typical of the arguments and evidence parents encounter in the online space:

- 'Screen time'
- 'Wired kids: how screen time affects children's brains'
- 'Kids and screen time: consider nutritional content not just calorie intake'
- 'How much screen time is too much?'
- 'Kids' screen time, is it worth the fight?'
- 'No limits: can the new guidelines on kids and screens work?'
- 'What the new screen time guidelines for kids really mean'.

And here is a research report dealing with the facts:

- 'Virtually impossible: limiting Australian children and adolescents' daily screen based media use'.

Select two or more articles that have conflicting views about children's use of the media. Evaluate each, looking for facts, opinion and bias. Write a report that outlines the claims and evidence for each article and make a recommendation about what parents should do in relation to this contested debate.



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Activity 13.20 Everyone is biased

The following is an excerpt from a letter to the editor:

As a health professional and father I read with interest the article on the use of technology in schools. Recently I was required to buy my son an iPad for use in grade four. Since then our family life has become disrupted as he wants to use it all the time. After doing some research I was shocked to find a large body of literature outlining the harmful effects of screen time on children's bodies and minds. Surely children should be allowed to be children and we should guard against such harm.

Identify all the biases and inconsistencies in the letter. Write a letter to the author providing advice about how to proceed.

GLOBALISED MEDIA: AGENCY AND CONTROL

The media world sits at a point where huge corporations wield considerable control through their ownership, management and physical and digital distribution of intellectual property (IP). Transnational corporations operate from companies located in different countries around the world. Corporations developed under a traditional media business model, such as Time Warner, 21st Century Fox and News

Corp, create and distribute media products that audiences can buy, hire or subscribe to. This content is often geolocated; that is, available in some markets but not others.

Newer digitally based multinational corporations operate across the world but are managed from one central location. Companies including Alphabet (Google and YouTube), Facebook (Instagram and WhatsApp) and Twitter make a considerable profit through a business model that facilitates the digital distribution of user-generated content, data aggregation and the harvesting and sale of user data. While both types of corporation control the distribution and consumption of media content, they do so in different ways, which has resulted in tension between audiences and traditional media distributors.

Media audiences increasingly expect to exercise their agency to consume media at a time and in a place of their choosing. The promise of digital technologies – audience power and choice – has put pressure on traditional media producers for whom control of IP has meant financial success. These companies release media products in different locations and at different price points. This distribution model, developed when media was a physical product that had to be shipped between countries, has today less to do with the cost of distribution than with the financial decisions of media distributors.

In a practice that has become known as the ‘Australia tax’, films, DVDs, magazines, apps and online content are differently priced between the United States, Australia and other countries based on what distributors think the market can bear. Film release dates, geoblocked content and Blu-ray zoning serve to maximise profits in a world where content can now be delivered instantaneously.

It can be infuriating waiting for a film that has been distributed in November in the United States, just in time for their awards season, to be released in Australia on Boxing Day or later. Australian audiences have seen the trailers, read the online reviews, watched the media commentary and the awards ceremonies long before the film is released, even if, as was the case for *Lion*, it was an Australian film.

At the same time as audiences have become increasingly aggravated by distribution systems that no longer meet 21st-century expectations, there has been a boom in independent, alternative, amateur and social content creators that has seen YouTube, Instagram and Facebook become dominant forces in media distribution. Content on these sites varies widely and they do not replace traditional media, but they do offer something different and very attractive to audiences – what media academics Stuart Cunningham and David Craig term social media entertainment or ‘communitainment’.

This rapidly expanding new media industry offers content that directly connects with audiences and is available on demand with the ability to satisfy a specific need, whether that need is entertainment or goal-oriented – how many times have you used YouTube tutorials to develop a skill for your media productions? As a result, the relationship between audiences and media has significantly altered, affording audiences greater agency and control over their consumption. It also gives social media **producers** greater access to media audiences.



Alamy Stock Photo/The Weinstein Company/Entertainment Pictures

Figure 13.23 *Lion* was released in Australia two months after its US release.

It has always been difficult to break into the media and remains so. However, for those who wish to do so on their own terms, sites like YouTube and Instagram offer the ability to harness the possibilities of a 'free' platform with which to distribute content that ranges from basic amateur rantings to highly produced quality programming that is tailored to a specific audience. YouTube also allows producers to monetise their efforts through advertising. Content creators can attract huge audiences. There are over 30 Australian YouTube channels with more than a million subscribers. For advertisers, the attractions are the ability to precisely target personalised audiences, such as specific fans, ethnic or demographic groups, in ways that are not possible with broadcast media. Over time, this shift will have a dramatic impact on traditional media revenue.

Contemporary media audiences are at once globalised and intensely personalised. YouTube producers are able to accommodate both. YouTuber Rachel Lee has a subscription base of nearly 450 000 from Australia and around the world. She publishes videos about her life, 'how to' and make-up tutorials and the products she uses. Videos are shot around Melbourne, edited and released twice a week. Combined with her Instagram and other social media accounts, Rachel has been able to monetise her life through product promotion and also makes money from the ads served when viewers click on her videos. Until 2017 there were no guidelines governing the responsibilities of social media influencers such as Rachel.

For more evidence to support your discussion of agency and control in contemporary media, see Chapter 8.

REGULATION AND CONTROL IN AUSTRALIAN MEDIA

The rationale for regulating the media is to balance the needs and responsibilities of all stakeholders in the media – industry, government, audiences and the Australian public. In the 20th century, regulation existed to ensure that commercial media were financially viable but responsible, to ensure that our media reflected diverse Australian interests and that audiences could be confident in the industry and engage in its output. Digital technologies and user-generated content have changed all that.

Regulation has traditionally been based on media industries – television, radio, the press, telephones, advertising and, most recently, the internet. When developing media regulation, each industry was considered as a stand-alone entity (see the diagram on page 196). In addition, each country developed and administered practices for regulating media based on its own social, commercial, industry and government circumstances. In Australia, media laws, regulations and industry self-regulatory practices were created to support and protect our media industries and Australian culture. Television content, for example, has been classified by broadcasters using a scheme modified from that used by the Classification Board. The system is overseen by ACMA and administered by Free TV and ASTRA.

Media convergence and hybridisation have blurred the lines between media industries and between commercial, artisan and individual creative output. This has resulted in challenges for regulating the use of the media. For example, should television still be regulated as television if it is streamed via the internet? Can and should user-generated content be controlled? What is the responsibility of advertisers online and how can Australia regulate content that is distributed by multinational corporations located overseas?

Regulation frameworks designed for an individual platform or medium ... are no longer appropriate for a multi-platform environment in which content is remastered and repurposed across platforms on an industrial scale and where previous distinctions between media forms and platforms have become blurred.

Graeme Turner, *Re-inventing the Media*, Routledge, 2016, p. 74

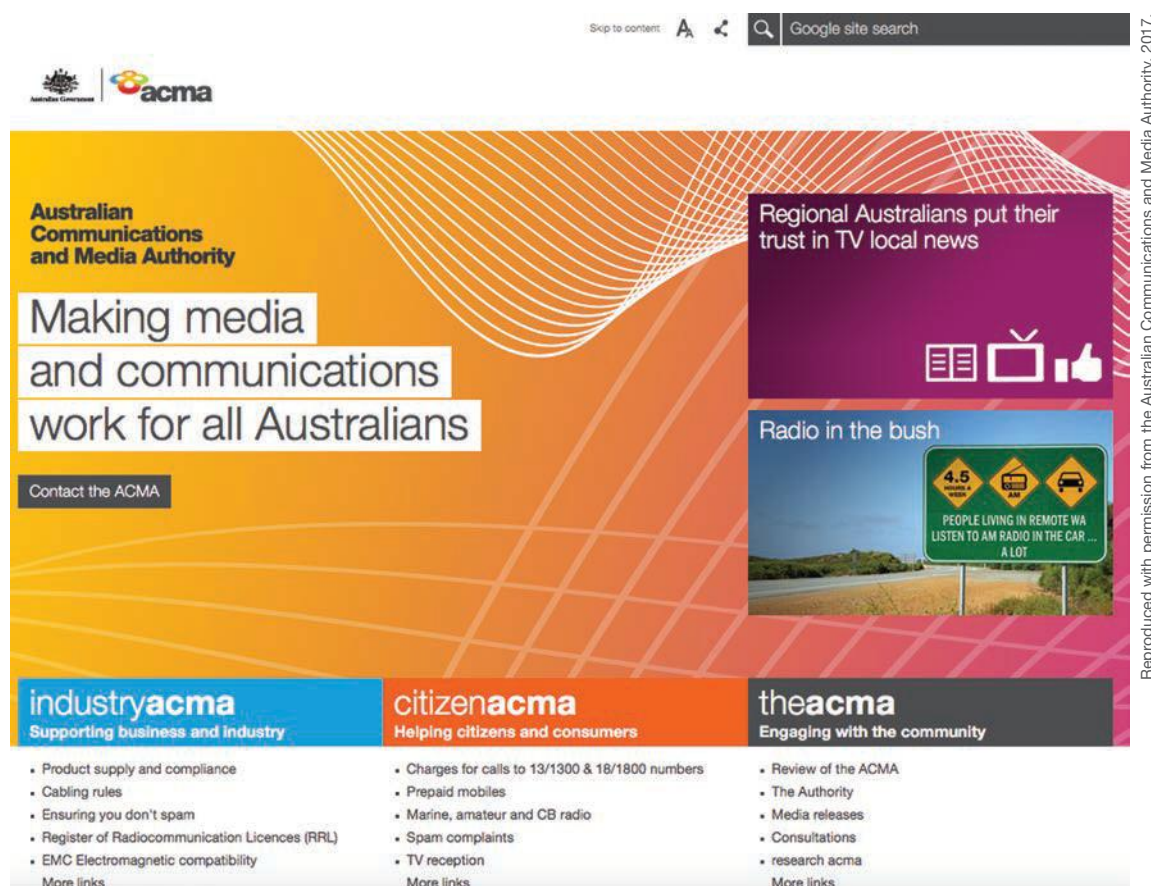
In Australia, control over media content is divided between the government and a system of industry self-regulation. This structure is based on three assumptions:

- The media is a powerful entity in society.
- Some audiences need to be protected from harmful or offensive material.
- Media organisations are large and profitable, they have both rights and responsibilities.

ACMA, the Australian Communications and Media Authority

ACMA is an Australian Government statutory authority that is responsible for the management and convergence of telecommunications, broadcasting, radiocommunications and online content.

ACMA describes itself as a 'converged' regulator, created to bring together the threads of the evolving communications universe. It supports Australian media and consumer law by working with industry to achieve active self-regulation, while ensuring industry compliance with licence conditions, codes of conduct and standards. ACMA monitors the effectiveness of government regulation and provides information, education and support to industry and consumers. Research into emerging regulatory issues and the changing media landscape provides an important evidence base.



Broadcasting

ACMA regulates broadcasting services in Australia. This includes:

- planning the radiofrequency spectrum that radio and TV services use
- issuing and renewing licences to broadcasters
- administering commercial ownership and control rules to maintain media diversity; regulating broadcasting content; developing program standards, such as the children's television standards
- supporting the development of codes of practice for the industry.

The internet

ACMA is responsible for monitoring online content, including internet and mobile phone content, and enforcing Australia's anti-spam law. Its role includes:

- investigating complaints about online content and gambling services
- encouraging the development of codes of practice for internet service providers and online content service providers, and monitoring compliance with these codes

Radiofrequency spectrum

ACMA plans and manages the radiofrequency spectrum in Australia. It is responsible for compliance with licensing requirements and investigating complaints of interference to services.

Telecommunications

ACMA licenses Australia's telecommunications carriers and regulates fixed-line and mobile telecommunications. ACMA's responsibilities include:

- supporting the development of codes of practice for the industry and monitoring compliance
- the NBN
- telephone numbering
- advising consumers on their rights and safeguards
- managing the delivery of services to people with a communication impairment.

In addition, ACMA conducts extensive research into media use by Australian media consumers of all ages and into all topics related to the media forms it oversees. Visit the Research ACMA website to find evidence to support several key knowledge and skills dot points associated with this outcome.



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Activity 13.21 What does ACMA regulate in your media life?

Write a list of all the media you have consumed in the past 24 hours. Mark each media form and text over which ACMA has control. Search the ACMA website to find information about how ACMA regulates this aspect of your media experience. Use this information in responses to questions on this area of study.

The Classification Board

The National Classification Scheme is a cooperative arrangement between the Australian Government and the State and Territory governments where the Classification Board classifies films, computer games and certain publications. The Classification Board is an Australian Government statutory body. Every film and computer game must be classified before it can be sold, hired or publicly shown to the public. Some publications are also classified. Publications that require classification are termed 'submittable'; that is, likely to be restricted to adults because they contain depictions or descriptions likely to cause offence to a reasonable adult, or are unsuitable for a minor to see or read, or are likely to be refused classification.

Contrary to popular belief, films, games and literature in Australia are not censored. Instead, we have a regulatory system where all stakeholders – producers and distributors, members of the Classification Board and media consumers – understand the classification code and how it is applied.

Classification is different from censorship. Censors watch, play or read texts to determine the rating each will be given. They also have the power to censor a text; that is, to order the removal of specific scenes, shots, language, images or words.

Classifiers watch, play or read texts and make decisions about which classification category a text will fall under, based on the National Classification Code and Classification Guidelines. They do not edit or censor texts. If a film, game or publication meets the classification criteria laid down in the National Classification Code, then it will be classified. If not, it will be refused classification. The Classification Board also provides consumer advice to support its decisions. This advice appears on products, packaging and in advertisements. Classification Board research indicates that this advice is highly regarded by the Australian public.

The National Classification Code is a simply expressed and publicly available document. Distributors submit products for classification with a clear understanding of the Code and the guidelines for classification and therefore the expectation that the product will receive a particular classification. Film and video game production and distribution is an expensive process and classification is part of this expense. Distributors make a financial decision about the classification they need to maximise their intended audience and submit a cut of a film or game that they believe will satisfy the requirements for that classification.

If a product does not receive the expected classification, the distributor can either appeal to the Classification Review Board or recut the text. The Review Board may uphold the original classification or change the classification. Few appeals are submitted because the classification process is so transparent. Interest groups and the public may complain to the Review Board about classification decisions. The Review Board publishes detailed reports on its decisions. By reading some of these, you can learn more about the evidence surrounding the rationale for regulating the media.



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The Classification Board also provides classification services to ACMA for internet content and to Border Security for illegally imported content. It conducts training for content assessors working in television and film organisations.

Classification Board members are chosen to be broadly representative of the Australian community and are drawn from diverse areas, age groups and backgrounds. Board members are not required to have any specific qualifications and are appointed for a maximum of seven years. Classification is a full-time job and Board members are required to relocate to Sydney.

The Board must reflect contemporary community standards and must apply the criteria set out in these documents in their deliberations.



The Commonwealth Classification (*Publications, Films and Computer Games*) Act 1995, section 11

The matters to be taken into account in making a decision on the classification of a publication, a film or a computer game include:

(a) the standards of morality, decency and propriety generally accepted by reasonable adults; and (b) the literary, artistic or educational merit (if any) of the publication, film or computer game; and	(c) the general character of the publication, film or computer game, including whether it is of a medical, legal or scientific character; and (d) the persons or class of persons to or amongst whom it is published or is intended or likely to be published.

© Commonwealth of Australia (Australian Communications and Media Authority) 2014 (CC BY 3.0)

National Classification Code (May 2005)

Classification decisions are to give effect, as far as possible, to the following principles:

(a) adults should be able to read, hear and see what they want; (b) minors should be protected from material likely to harm or disturb them; (c) everyone should be protected from exposure to unsolicited material that they find offensive;	(d) the need to take account of community concerns about: (i) depictions that condone or incite violence, particularly sexual violence; and (ii) the portrayal of persons in a demeaning manner.

Classification principles

The classification system is based on the rationale as outlined above. It uses three important principles in determining classification:

- 1 The classifiable elements – there are six classifiable elements in films or computer games:
 - Themes
 - Violence
 - Sex
 - Language
 - Drug use
 - Nudity.
- 2 The importance of context – is the element justified in terms of its context for the audience?

3 Assessing impact – impact is classified as one of the following:

- Very mild – G
- Mild – PG
- Moderate – M
- Strong – MA
- High – R 18+
- Very high – RC.

Classification takes account of the context and impact of each element, including their frequency and intensity, and their cumulative effect. It also takes account of the purpose and tone of a sequence, and how material is treated.

Classification categories

The *Classification (Publications, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995* names the classification categories for films and computer games, and the Code describes them.

Films (public exhibition and DVD) and computer games may be classified G, PG, M, MA 15+ or R. Films can also be classified R 18+ or X 18+, but these classifications are not applicable to computer games.

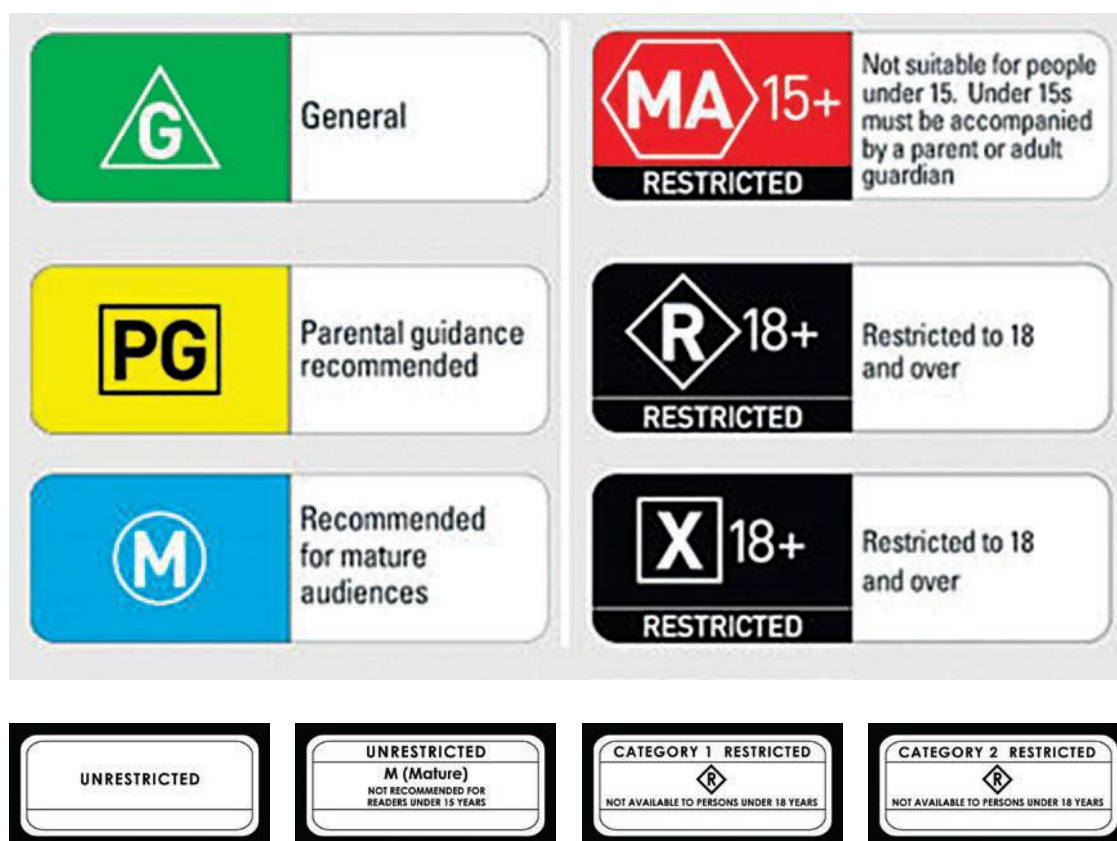


Figure 13.24 Classification categories

Activity 13.22 Investigating the work of the Classification Board

Many media commentators and students have put the view that Australians should be able to see, hear, play and read what they like. This research activity investigates the work of the Classification Board; in particular, its research and public awareness campaigns.

- 1 Go to the Classification Board website to find out what it does, how it works and the arguments in support of classification in Australia.
- 2 Read some of the research the Classification Board has conducted with consumers and stakeholders over recent years.
- 3 Research arguments for and against classification in Australia. Write notes detailing your findings.
- 4 Write an evaluation of the issues and challenges relating to regulating classification in Australia.



WebLink

Personal regulation in an online environment

One of the challenges of regulating media content today is the availability on the internet of material that may harm or disturb. Films, games and television programs that have not been classified or have been refused classification can be illegally downloaded. Those who do so argue that they have a right to consume whatever they like. Those who support the principles of the Classification Code as outlined above argue otherwise. It is not possible to prevent such behaviour and the debate rests on two issues: individual freedom and ethics.

‘Personal regulation’ is the term used to describe the choices individuals make when deciding whether to consume a media product they know is unsuitable, potentially disturbing for them or others who may see it or is illegally obtained. Personal regulatory choices are based on many factors, including one’s values, views about the media and its influence, the availability of such material and the behaviour – real or perceived – of friends, family and others.

Parents often make decisions about the appropriateness of films, games and television programs on behalf of their children. Your parents may have prevented you from consuming particular media products when you were younger. If this is the case, ask them about their reasoning. As children grow into adulthood, they assume responsibility for the personal regulation of their media use. For example, many adults may choose not to watch a film that has been classified as containing a high level of violence or sex because they do not wish to be exposed to such material. When a text has been obtained online and has not been classified, there is no consumer advice to guide viewers.

In a digital media world, it is far easier than ever before to access a wide range of media that may disturb, is illegal or is at odds with one’s moral compass or values. How should individuals and the community manage this issue?

Activity 13.23 Just because we can, should we?

Create a list of reasons for and against the illegal downloading of non-classified material. Share your list with your classmates and hold a class debate. Support your arguments with evidence from the Classification Board and other sources that you have investigated for this and other areas of study.

Classification in an online environment

With content in all media forms readily available on the internet, how can our government maintain its regulatory borders? Should we even attempt to do so and what does it mean for Australian culture, the media industry and the protection of vulnerable audiences if we don’t?

It is clear that the Australian public want access to films, television programs and games at the same time as they become available overseas. It can be frustrating reading reviews and commentary, let alone spoiler alerts, while waiting for a product to be released in Australia. Torrenting and VPN technology has facilitated early access to big-name programs, but not everybody has the skills or the desire to break the law. In response, free-to-air and pay television have adapted their scheduling to ensure that they do not lose market share, but what is to be done about smaller independent media products that may not produce the revenue streams of *Game of Thrones* or *Grand Theft Auto* but are nevertheless popular?

Video games

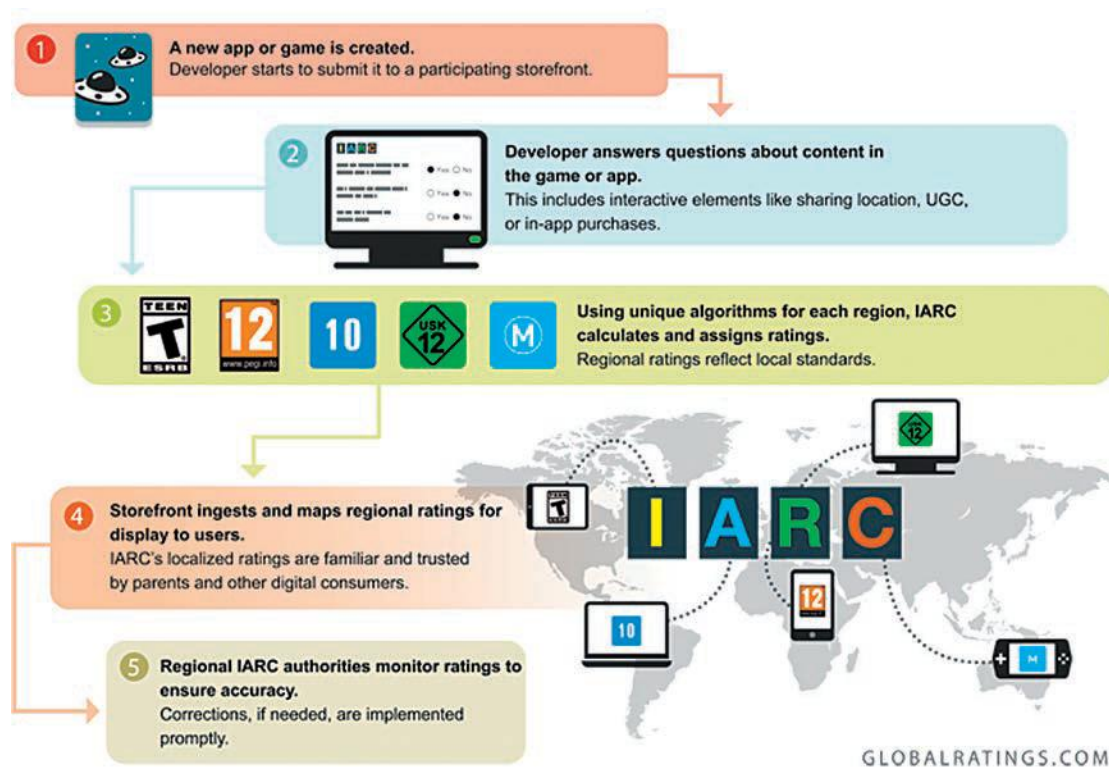
The number of mobile and online video games released and digitally distributed around the world has grown dramatically in recent years. Many of these are the product of small, independent or niche studios in Australia and overseas that cannot afford classification fees or have never even heard of the Classification Board.

After a 12-month trial, in 2017 the government formally adopted the International Age Rating Coalition (IARC) online system for the classification of mobile and online games. IARC is an international system in which game developers answer an online questionnaire about the content of the game, which then generates a rating for each of the 36 countries in the coalition. In Australia, the rating is accompanied by the consumer advice gamers are familiar with. Classifications made under this system are subject to audit by the Classification Board.

The system has meant that each year thousands of games are now available for Australian gamers that would previously not have been legally distributed. In the 18 months prior to the trial beginning, 647 games were classified in Australia, one was refused classification. In the 18 months of the trial

before the system was fully approved, 690 539 games were classified, most of which would previously never have been submitted; of these, 1086 were refused classification.

The IARC trial was accompanied by some controversy in the gaming world with the apparent spike in the number of games refused classification. Headlines screamed about censorship. The fact that these games would not previously have been submitted for classification was all but ignored. For the record, in the 18 months before the trial, 0.154 per cent of games were refused classification; during the trial, it was 0.157 per cent. The results are not statistically significant.



The 'How IARC Works' graphic is the property of the International Age Rating Coalition, Inc. and the rating icons it includes are trademarks of the respective rating authorities. Source: <https://www.globalratings.com>.

Figure 13.25 How the IARC system works



Loveshack Entertainment Pty Ltd

Figure 13.26 *FRAMED*, an independent game created in Melbourne

Netflix

In Australia, all television programming must be classified. This includes subscription video on demand services such as Netflix. Television broadcasters employ trained in-house content assessors to classify content according to Australian classification standards as modified for television (see below).

Netflix has a huge back catalogue of titles, which it has been adding to its Australian catalogue at the rate of thousands of hours of programming every month. The existing self-regulatory system simply could not keep up and customers were angry at delays in the release of new titles. It was in Netflix's commercial interest to develop a system that would keep customers happy and avoid the temptations of illegal downloads.

In December 2016, the Australian Government announced a pilot of a new self-regulation tool that combines the technology inherent in the Netflix catalogue and delivery system with Australia's classification ratings and consumer advisories. The system is the first online classification system for films and television. It is monitored by the Classification Board. The system has experienced some controversy when *13 Reasons Why* was rated MA 15+. Youth mental health provider Headspace called the series 'dangerous'. The issue could form a case study for this outcome.

Stakeholder classification

The Australian Council on Children and the Media (ACCM) is a stakeholder group of organisations and people interested in the wellbeing of children. 'ACCM advocates for children's right to live in a media environment that supports their healthy development, expands their horizons and provides them with pleasure.'

ACCM conducts campaigns around children's media issues, including classification, the sexualisation of children in the media, violence, fast food and children's programming. Its initiatives include the Know Before You Go Movie Reviews and Know Before You Load App Reviews, which feature stop light age-appropriate recommendations and extremely detailed descriptions of content. ACCM classified *The Edge of Seventeen* (2016), directed by Kelly Fremon Craig, as not recommended under 15 due to themes, under-age drinking, coarse language and sexual references. The Classification Board classified the film as M, with the advice that it contains sexual references and coarse language.



Alamy Stock Photo/Pictorial Press Ltd

Figure 13.27 *The Edge of Seventeen* (2016)

Activity 13.24 Different needs, different approaches

Study the 'Who we are' and What we do' sections of the Classification Board, the IARC and the ACCM websites, then look at some classifications published by these organisations. What can you determine about the similarities and differences between these organisations? Create a case study about a controversial text.



Industry self-regulation

Each media industry has a self-regulatory body that governs its operation. Self-regulatory organisations in Australia include:

- Free TV
- Australian Subscription Television and Radio Association (ASTRA) for television
- Commercial Radio Australia for radio
- Australian Record Industry Association (ARIA) for music
- Communications Alliance for internet service providers
- Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association (AMTA) for the mobile telecommunications industry
- Australian Press Council for newspapers
- Advertising Standards Bureau for advertising.

Self-regulatory organisations often describe themselves as a 'peak body', which means an organisation that represents the interests of an entire sector of industry. Industry self-regulation operates on several levels. Media self-regulatory organisations regulate content by ensuring that government legislation, community standards and industry codes of practice are adhered to by member organisations. They also advocate to the government and other organisations on behalf of members when issues of policy and operation of the industry are raised. The work of self-regulatory organisations is funded by their members.

Self-regulation has another meaning in the context of the economic and ethical decisions that media proprietors make when selecting programming and content to distribute, publish, broadcast or screen. This form of self-regulation includes gatekeeping. It is unusual, for example, for a media outlet such as a newspaper, radio or TV station to publish news that is critical of itself or other companies owned by the same proprietor.

Sometimes commercial decisions are based around community values about programming that might potentially disturb audiences. For example, in the week following the Port Arthur massacres Channel Nine changed its scheduled Sunday movie to a more family-friendly option and the film originally scheduled was broadcast several months later. Commercial media depends on audiences in order to sell advertising; it is not a good financial decision to upset potential viewers.

The laws about media content and scheduling are very clear. It is worth having a look at the free-to-air television commercial code of practice to get a full understanding of how detailed the work of regulating the media can be. If you are interested in other media industries, their mission statements and codes of practice are available on their websites. You can use these as evidence of the issues and challenges of media regulation in Australia.

Self-regulation: advantages and issues

Industry self-regulation means that media industries regulate themselves. This has advantages and disadvantages. Self-regulation means that the government is not involved at the level of handling complaints (see below), which is cheaper for the Australian taxpayer as the cost is borne by each peak body charging its members, who in turn charge advertisers. Audiences end up paying through the cost of advertised products.

Although the laws and codes of practice under which the media work are very clear, the interpretation of these rules is often in dispute. Individuals, stakeholder groups and parliamentarians all have their reasons for criticising the day-to-day implementation of self-regulation. The system is based on the premise that those who have the most knowledge about an industry and a vested interest in the industry thriving are well placed to make policy and deal with issues. On the other hand, it can mean that those with a vested interest may formulate and administer codes of practice and sit on committees that hear complaints, although most organisations are comprised of both industry and public members.

When we see, read or hear something we don't like in the media, we have the right to make a complaint. However, as much media is time-based, the complaint will be heard long after the event and the alleged harm has taken place. In terms of advertising, once ads have been seen, they cannot be unseen and by the time a complaint has been heard, the advertising campaign may have finished.

Press Council complaints can be heard months after the publication of an article. For example, a complaint made about a misleading article about Greens leader Richard Di Natale that was published in May 2016 was not heard until January 2017, when the complaint was upheld. Did the incorrect article affect any voters' intentions in the 2016 election? We will never know. What can be done? Is there a solution to this dilemma?



Weblink



Weblink

Self-regulation and personal regulation in social media

The social media on which audiences rely are privately owned companies residing mostly in the United States. They are not subject to the industry self-regulatory practices with which Australian media industries must comply. Platforms such as Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram regulate their own content, often using features of the algorithms that determine the content of users' feeds to identify and deal with problematic content. Each publishes its policies and terms of service, which users must agree to, before they can create accounts. Did you read these policies? Do you know what your rights and obligations are?

Multinational media organisations reflect the values of the place in which they are created as well as those in which they operate. For organisations as large as Facebook, this can become both a management and PR issue. In recent years, campaigns such as 'Free the Nipple' have posed problems for social media originating in socially conservative America but distributing content worldwide. This can mean that sites remove material they designate as unsuitable, fail to act on complaints about material that is offensive in one location but not in another, and delete users with little or no warning or appeal.

Can social media platforms that are available to billions of users ever contextualise content that is being shared worldwide but has been created in a particular place for a particular reason? Clearly, most issues and complaints are not dealt with by individuals but by computer programs; there could never be enough employees to handle complaints manually. Can the code that goes into social media algorithms be flexible enough to accommodate the values of billions of users?

Social media users create and share content and therefore have the agency to influence others by generating or supporting political movements and moral panics, but also through the use of shame or trolling techniques to police what they perceive as deviant behaviour. The technological affordances of social media mean that such tactics can take on a life of their own, for good or bad. Users create and use their own moral compass to navigate social media sites.

As you learnt in Chapter 8, the nature of contemporary media means that audiences operate increasingly in a bubble of content that reflects their views of the world. While this has always been the case for news (for example, *Herald Sun* readers tend to have opinions that are different from those who read *The Age*), the nature of search and social media algorithms, together with who we friend and what they share, means that it is possible to live a life mediated by a particular world view in which individuals are not exposed to alternative opinions. This life may be comfortable, as can be explained by dependency, cultivation and reinforcement theorists, but is it healthy for a democratic society? Does the very nature of contemporary media lead to a spiral of silence in which alternative views are presented less and less?

YouTube

With more than a billion viewers each month, YouTube has more visitors than any other social media platform, including Facebook. Each visitor watches over nine hours of content, yet apart from copyright issues there is much less discussion about the use and control of YouTube than of other social media. Is this because the community thinks of YouTube more as an extension of television (with cats) than a social media network?

YouTube distributes video in 87 languages. With such a huge viewer base, how can the platform balance creator and audience agency with the challenges of controlling content? While most of the content of YouTube is engaging and safe, some of it is not. Given the wide user base, it stands to reason that some content will challenge viewers.

The content of YouTube is regulated in several ways. YouTube technologies in part control copyright infringements, but the platform also harnesses the power of users, or as it calls them, the YouTube community, to regulate content.

YouTube sets out the tone of its community guidelines through four overarching themes:

Respect the YouTube community

Don't cross the line

We review your reports carefully

Join in and have fun

www.youtube.com/yt/policyandsafety/communityguidelines.html

YouTube spells out unacceptable material in some detail under the heading 'Crossing the Line'. This includes material that is controlled by most regulatory systems – nudity, sexual, violent and graphic content, as well as material that can be facilitated by the social media form itself, including hateful, harmful or dangerous content, spam, scams, copyright infringements and threats. Community members are invited to report breaches of the code of conduct which, if found true, will result in a strike and/or removal of content. The account can be suspended or closed. Is this a workable solution, given the size of the platform and variety of content from different societies that express a range of values, some of which are not consistent with the values of viewers?

Each of the examples above raises questions about the ethics of industry self-regulation, and the rights of audiences and creators of online content. Before we go on to examine one industry in detail, take time to think about the issues and challenges of regulation and control in a contemporary media landscape.

Activity 13.25 If I ruled the world ...

Reflect on all that you have learnt about media regulation so far. Use this reflection to create a five-point set of rules for media regulation. When you have completed your list, swap with the person next to you. Compare lists, discuss them and come up with the best five points you can.

Repeat this activity by sharing with another pair.

Finally, create a class list of the best 10 points. Write a brief report about how the process helped you clarify your thinking.

ADVERTISING INFLUENCE IN AN ONLINE WORLD

The purpose of advertising is not necessarily to sell products and services but to influence audiences by engaging them by providing information. Although it is as old as media itself, advertising has developed significantly through the affordances offered by digital technologies. Refresh your understanding of these changes by reading from 'Rethinking audiences' to 'Ad blockers and anti-tracking add-ons' in Chapter 8. As you read, make a summary of the points that relate to this area of study. You can use these as evidence for how contemporary media is being used by individuals and media institutions.

Brand integration

Once an ad was an ad and audiences could usually tell the difference between content and advertising. Product placement, the insertion of products into media texts, began with print media in the 19th century and was evident in films right from the beginning. It was useful, advertisers were able to get exposure and audiences were positioned to see their favourite actors and characters using products.

Brand integration, as it is now known, is big business. It has become a vital part of the media industry and plays an increasing role in funding television and film production. In a digital environment, branding in the form of the insertion of products or advertising content into a narrative on billboards and television, computer or phone screens is inserted in post-production and changed when texts are distributed in different locations.



Figure 13.28 Once an ad was an ad, but that was a long time ago.

In Australia, brand integration is largely unregulated; producers of films and narrative television programs can include as many brands as they like in their productions. Television producers of non-factual programming may accept payment from an advertiser for promoting a brand without disclosure. In factual programming, the producer must disclose a commercial arrangement; this disclosure can occur during the program or on the program's website.

Brand integration may become part of the storyline or prominent in popular programming such as *The Block* and *Offspring*. Under the Commercial TV Industry Code of Practice, stations are allowed to broadcast 13 minutes per hour of non-program matter between 6 p.m. and midnight. Brand integration does not count as advertising. It is legal, but is it ethical?

Want to know more about brand integration? Showbrands, a digital marketing company, has created a glossary of terms used in the product placement industry. It makes very interesting, if a little disturbing, reading.

Websites and social media for television programs offer styling tips and online shopping so that audiences can use the products or style themselves like their favourite character. Some of this is clearly advertising, some takes the form of **native advertising** where the difference between editorial content is often unclear. The Australian Association of National Advertisers, the advertising industry's self-regulatory body, has published a code of ethics, best practice guidelines and a document about the principles of native advertising in an attempt to ensure transparency. You can download and read these documents on the Australian Association of National Advertisers website.

When celebrity becomes sellebrity

Native advertising, 'influencers', social media and the rise of celebrity culture mean that the relationship between audiences and advertising is more personal than ever before and it can be all but impossible to determine what is advertising and what is not. Increasingly, we simply accept this blurring of the line between content and promotion as the price we pay for unlimited access to 'free' online sites and media platforms. We know that our data is being collected, aggregated and sold for profit, but reason that everyone is in the same situation so it must be all right. Often we unconsciously use the third-person effect when thinking about the impact of online advertising. We believe that we can tell what is advertising and what is not but others may be fooled, but can we?

'The power of cool and product placement in social media', published on advertising site Mumbrella, explains the complexities. Hashtag marketing is a thing.

Advertising can also become news content when social media posts are published in newspapers and online news sites such as BuzzFeed. Instagram shots are cheaper than employing a photographer and give news sites a trendy look that attracts readers. When an Insta image of a personality at an event wearing a brand's clothing and drinking a sponsored product appears in the news, the line between advertising and content becomes very blurred indeed.

Jesinta Franklin, former Miss Universe Australia, who has a combined social media following of over 527 000 people, is a leader in social media promotion. Her images often appear on news sites. Check out her Instagram page to see how she does it.

Jesinta is upfront about her promotional role, acknowledging and even thanking companies that provide products and services. Other celebrities are less honest and their financial links to the products they promote are only discovered when they become obvious or they accidentally post the suggested caption with posting instructions.

Brand integration has long been part of the media, but recent changes in advertising through media convergence and hybridisation have altered the relationship between media users and corporations. Social media makes advertising appear more personal and targeted because it is. The active and passive data we provide through our online



Getty Images/Don Arnold/WireImage



Weblink



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Weblink

activities fuel **surveillance capitalism**, which can be conducted across national boundaries, meaning that Australian laws governing advertising and codes of ethical practice may not apply. If a company is operating in Australia, it is subject to Australian law. The Advertising Standards Bureau has issued best practice guidelines for social media influencers. You can follow the weblink to view them. It is not realistic, however, to expect the same standards of overseas companies. Has social media strengthened our relationship with advertisers and, if so, at what cost?

Activity 13.26 Brand integration and you

Choose a media text such as a film or television program, or a social media page or personality that you follow. Screenshot images that contain brand integration, identify these and analyse how the brand is using the media to influence its target market. Use relevant communication theories to support your analysis.

Use your analysis to discuss the changing relationship between the media and its audiences.

Gamification and advergaming

Gamification is the term used to describe the application of game design principles to non-game contexts such as education, health promotion, or in the case of McDonald's Monopoly, advertising.

An **advergame** is an online promotional tool that combines advertising with video gaming. While advergames have been around since the 1980s, digital technologies have seen a dramatic rise in this form of advertising, significantly changing the nature and form of advertising. Organisations as diverse as SBS, Marvel and employment site SEEK engage users with advergames. Why?

The benefits of advergaming for marketers include:

- increased brand awareness – gamers choose to engage in the game, which can promote aspects of the brand that may not be possible through traditional advertising
- positive brand interaction – the games provide a positive experience associated with the brand
- brand loyalty, through positive reinforcement and rewards as players move through the game
- promotion of products and enticements such as discounts and special offers
- data collection and analysis of user interaction with the game and the site
- building the brand through competition and virality – the message spreads and sticks because it is engaging and users want to play with their friends.

You will have played advergames before; you may even have some advergaming apps on your phone right now. Share your favourites with your classmates and spend a bit of time playing some new advergames – for research purposes, of course. Creative digital agency Soap, together with indie games developer SMG, creates advergames. Play some, see how you engage with them and ask your classmates how they feel. Use this research for the next activity.



Weblink



Figure 13.29 Soap's mission statement is all about user engagement.

Activity 13.27 Communication theory and advergames

Advergames are excellent evidence for some, but not all, of the communication theories and ethical issues you have studied for this outcome.

Choose three theories and try applying them to advergames. Suggested theories include the Laswell model, the multistep flow model, social learning theory, uses and gratifications theory, reception theory, the ideavirus, and spreadable and stickable media. Some will fit well; others you will find lacking. That is the point; no one theory fully describes the relationship between the media and its audience in every media form.

Evaluate how the theories you chose explain the principles behind the success of advergames and the limitations of each theory for this media form of advertising.

Evaluate the relationship the game builds with consumers and the ethical issues they raise. Use the advertising industry code of best practice guideline as evidence for your analysis.

Advergames, children, ethics and control

Companies that sell food aimed at families and children are increasingly using online games with characters that will appeal to children. The Happy Meal website is a good example.

The site has games, apps, activities, promotional characters from films and animations promoting McDonald's fruit bags. There is even a handy clock so children can monitor how long they have been on the site (if they are old enough to tell the time). Jump on and play a few games. It is interesting to note that the characters in the games eat healthy food. Why do you think this is the case?

Gaming is fun, but the use of advergames in promoting products to children raises several ethical questions related to the influence of the media and whether players can truly exert agency over their actions if they are unaware of the true purpose of the game.



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ONLINE MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS AND CHILDHOOD'S INTENTION TO CONSUME UNHEALTHY FOOD

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of online advertising on social network sites on children's intention to consume fast food in Australia. The study adopted a qualitative, inductive approach to data collection using a sample of 30 Australian

children who use social network sites and their parents. It was found that fast food advertisements on social networking sites could manipulate the young audience members in terms of their purchasing likelihood, views on fast food, and eating habits. The results from the interviews also indicated that peer pressure is an important element of online communications on social networking sites. By showing their advertisements to

a group of young consumers, companies can create a sense of socialization and associate their product with a community. This study is one of the first to consider broad aspects of children's perception of marketing communications on social networking sites in the context of the fast food industry.

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Advertising in Australia is regulated by voluntary codes of conduct. The AANA Code for Advertising & Marketing Communications to Children and the Best Practice Guideline: Responsible Marketing Communications in the Digital Space address games and websites 'directed primarily at children'.

However, many sites are, officially, not directed primarily at children although they feature animations, characters and memes that engage children and are used extensively by them.

FAST FOOD COMPANIES USE SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES TO TARGET CHILDREN

Park Thaichon, Assistant Professor of Marketing, S P Jain School of Global Management

Australia's voluntary advertising codes around the marketing of fast food to children are not very effective in protecting them from being manipulated by innovative online marketing, especially in social media, our new research has found.

Australia has a set of regulatory and self-regulatory measures controlling the promotion of food and beverages to children. The system of industry self-regulation codes includes the Responsible Children's Marketing Initiative (RCMI) and Quick Service Initiative (QSRI), administered by the Advertising Standards Board.

While the RCMI and QSRI apply to corporate websites, other online activities are not well regulated because of their diverse and complex nature. The RCMI and QSRI are also criticised for not controlling definitions of marketing messages like 'healthier choice' and the narrow interpretation of activities that should be restricted (that is, those 'directed primarily at children').

Our research used in-depth interviews to find the strategies used by social networking sites to actively craft children's attitudes to and consumption of fast food. This includes tactics such as giveaway vouchers and toys to engage a young audience.

One of these, the engagement strategy, uses fun and novelty to appeal to young kids. For example, young consumers are encouraged to 'like' companies' Facebook

page or sign up for their Twitter feeds, usually in exchange for premiums such as toys or discounts.

Our study included a sample of 30 Australian children who used social networking sites. Half of the children of the sample were male and their average age was 12.5: the youngest was 11 and the oldest 16. Their parents were also present during the interview; however they agreed not to intervene during the conversation.

The children said they wanted to see online advertisements on social networking sites so they could find out more about certain toy collections. Content on the websites could also prompt young users to visit linked sites, such as corporate webpages.

Many of them said that the offer of complimentary toys that come with the meal options motivated them to look at advertisements.

Children stated that they were happy to see or to receive more information through advertisements on social networking sites. This can be considered a result of the ability of tailored online advertising (web browsing behaviour or demographic-based advertisements) to meet the interests of a target audience group.

The research showed children feel more approving of advertising and even perceive it as part of their day-to-day activities, if they are constantly exposed to a large number of ads for a long period of time.

The appealing pictures in the advertisements clearly create positive perceptions of the consumption of fast

food. Many of the children admitted that they were enticed to try the foods depicted in the online ads because of their eye-catching visuals.

EFFECTS OF ADVERTISING ON SOCIAL NETWORK SITES

On Facebook, young users' activities, such as liking a page or posting a comment, are shown in the newsfeeds of their friend's Facebook accounts as endorsements or sponsored stories.

It is often harder for children and parents to detect the boundaries between online content and pure advertising, on social media sites than in traditional media such as television. On top of that, social networking sites use a wide range of behavioural advertising that targets the audience on the basis of their web browsing behaviour and demographics.

Our interviews indicate children are influenced by the promotion of fast food products as well as the complimentary toys, exploiting their natural curiosity about new foods and love of novelty. Eventually, this leads to likely purchase of the advertised food and a change of their eating habits.

MORE REGULATION NEEDED?

Existing regulation of food advertising to children in Australia, especially on digital platforms, is still limited. But children might not be aware of the actual effects of advertising on their behaviour and can be influenced to purchase particular brands and products if the advertisements are appealing enough.





This points to a need for policy makers to review the regulations related to online communications targeting young children on social networking sites. As such, the dimensions of visuals used in advertising can be strictly defined and monitored to protect customers at a younger age.

Also, the use of incentives such as toys targeting young children should be restricted. In addition, advertising seems to exert its influence on children through another agent – their peers, a relatively strong force in determining children’s food preferences and choices.

In general, a tougher legislation system to shield children from unhealthy food marketing is essential to prevent the problems of obesity and to build a healthier society.

The Conversation, 5 August 2016 Creative Commons licence

The European Commission conducted research into online marketing to children. Results of the report, *The impact of online marketing on children’s behaviour*, are available in a factsheet.

Research in the form of a literature review conducted by Family Kids and Youth in England, *Literature Review of Research on Online Food and Beverage Marketing to Children*, reveals current research and academic thinking about the topic.

In 2011 the Commonwealth Parliament commissioned a research paper, ‘Marketing obesity? Junk food, advertising and kids’ by Dr Rhonda Jolly, which outlines both sides of the debate.

Australia’s commercial media industries are controlled by industry self-regulation. There is a separate regulatory organisation for each industry. For advertising, this organisation is the Advertising Standards Bureau.



Weblink

FROM THE ADVERTISING STANDARDS BUREAU

AIM OF SELF-REGULATION

The aim of self-regulation is to maintain high advertising standards and ensure consumer trust and protection for the benefit of all of the community.

CURRENT SYSTEM OF SELF-REGULATION

The current system of self-regulation was established by the Australian Association of National Advertisers (AANA) in 1998 following extensive consultation with industry, consumer and government representatives. It recognises that advertisers share an interest in promoting consumer confidence in and respect for general standards of advertising.

Self-regulation provides an effective and efficient way for advertisers to engage with consumers and to respond to consumers’ concerns about advertising. It ensures consumer protection by providing a free and fast route for consumers to express their views about advertising and to have an impartial body to contact.

SELF-REGULATION CODES

Self-regulation of the advertising industry has been achieved by establishing a set of rules and principles of best practice to which the industry voluntarily agrees to be bound.

These rules are expressed in a number of Codes and industry Initiatives. The rules are based on the belief that advertisements should be legal, decent, honest and truthful, prepared with a sense of social responsibility to the consumer and society as a whole and with due respect to the rules of fair competition.

The work of the Advertising Standards Bureau is not underpinned by any Government legislation.

INDUSTRY SUPPORT OF THE SELF-REGULATION SYSTEM

Industry support is fundamental to the success of Australia’s world class system of advertising industry self-regulation.

Participating advertisers demonstrate their support for self-regulation by instructing their advertising agencies to adhere to its various codes of advertising standards, by agreeing to the levy being applied to their media expenditures, and by complying with decisions of the Advertising Standards Board.

Participating advertising agencies support the system by monitoring the various codes and determinations made by the Advertising Standards Board and consulting with their advertiser clients.

Participating media buyers support the system by collecting and remitting the levy through their accounting systems.

Participating media operators support the system by promoting self-regulation through information and advertising material prepared by the Advertising Standards Bureau. They also support the system by assisting with removal of ads if appropriate.

Advertising Standards Bureau

In response to community concern in 2015, the Advertising Standards Bureau conducted its own research into ‘Community perceptions on advertising directed primarily to children’.

Junk Food Injunction is an online magazine produced by the Cancer Council of New South Wales. This edition covers complaints made to the Advertising Standards Board about fast food advertising and particularly about advergames. Read their contribution to the debate. The results are quite different from those of other research papers.



Weblink



What if an ad offends, misleads or is in breach of a code of practice?

Everyone has the right to lodge a complaint to the Advertising Standards Board. Hundreds of complaints are received each month. The Board considers the complaint, obtains a response from the advertiser, refers to the advertising codes of practice and makes a decision. The complaint can be upheld, in which case the ad can be modified or discontinued, or dismissed. Search the website to read the reports.

In 2015 case number 0205/15 about the Fanta 'Fruit Slam 2' app was upheld on the grounds that the app was primarily directed at children. As a result, the app was removed from the app store. Search for the case to read the arguments and evidence provided by both sides.

One of the issues with a self-regulatory system is that by the time of the complaint any harm or offence has already been committed. It is argued that because a complaint has been upheld advertisers will not produce ads like this in the future. Do you think this is true? There is some evidence that advertisers might game the system on the grounds that any publicity is good publicity. If you search the Advertising Standards Board website for most complained about ads, you will see some companies that appear frequently. Apparently they are slow learners. What do you think?

Activity 13.28 Advertising fast food to children: who has agency and what are the controls?

This debate is outlined in the documents and links above. Read through them (perhaps different groups in your class could read and summarise the information).

Use this information to create an analysis that evaluates arguments about the activities of children, advertisers, the self-regulatory system and the government in regard to advertising to children in an online environment.

The self in contemporary media

In Chapter 3 we looked at the representation of self in the media and in Chapter 8 we looked at audiences. Now we are going to examine how the very nature of self has changed as contemporary media has gone online.

Anyone born before the early 1950s learnt to read before they saw television. Your parents learnt the codes and conventions of television before they learnt to read. You learnt the codes and conventions of the computer and of television before you learnt to read. Children today learn to swipe and search as well as the codes and conventions of television and of computing before they learn to read. What will your children learn?

The media has become an increasingly significant part of children's growth, play, informal learning and lives, and thus of children's socialisation. Their world is not just mediated through consumption of the media, but the very way they think of the world, act in it, build and maintain relationships is mediated; that is, structured through the media. For children, the media is not something to study, it just is part of life. Every day, thousands of toddlers across the globe point to a screen and say, 'Talk Grandma'. To them it is just how life is.

What do such changes mean for the construction of self and relationships? Fifteen years ago, Professor Mimi Ito studied Japanese teenagers socialising as they sat in groups messaging friends on their phones. At the time, this phenomenon was just beginning in Australia and the end of civilised society was predicted. Instead of judging, Ito observed the teenagers' behaviour, researched their motivations and termed the practice 'virtual co-presence'. Teenagers were with their friends and at the same time connected to wider circles of friends via their phones. Today this behaviour has become normalised – the way things are.

Your socialisation into adulthood is mediated. This process has already begun through your construction of an online identity. You have assumed agency over this process through the selection, construction and publication of those aspects of self you want the world to see and know, your 'personal brand'.

Personal branding is not new. As George Bernard Shaw said last century, 'Life isn't about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself.' Today, however, the digital construction and distribution of your

brand is important to living in a mediatised world in which it is not possible to conduct life without media technologies such as mobile phones and social media.

Personal branding is about identifying and communicating what makes you unique and differentiated. Your online brand (digital footprint) is established through: photos, blogs, articles, comments, recommendations, reviews, likes, favourites, retweets, etc. Managing your online brand ... can enhance both your personal and professional brand.

South African university careers guide, quoted in N Couldry and A Hepp, *The Mediated Construction of Reality*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2016

Everyone engages in personal branding. Most, however, do not consider the curation of their online selves as much more than the social act of making friends and sharing experiences as teenagers have always done, but with Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram. Each app has a different role in constructing and sharing the social lives of users who simply employ technology to project themselves online playfully and authentically. Everyone does it, but we don't think of our actions as creating a personal brand in a mediatised life. For most, it is just us – the way we are.

Most social media users understand the performative nature of our online presence; after all, who doesn't want the best shot in a selfie and lots of likes for a meme? The pleasures, freedom and communicative possibilities are what we think of when we use social media, but does this agency have a dark side?

You will have been warned about curating your online presence to present your best self to future employers. Life online is permanent. This was not a consideration for your parents. For them, youthful indiscretions, bad hair and each developmental phase were mostly forgotten, leaving no lasting traces that could be discovered in the days or years ahead.

Today it is all but impossible to leave the past behind. Even if you don't have a social media presence, which is unlikely, your friends will. There will be evidence, and that evidence is open to interpretation. A social gathering with a few of your mates can make for some great memories, or look quite different to someone who does not know the context of your hijinks. We do not know what these 'invisible audiences', as internet researcher danah boyd calls them, will make of your former self. Digital media means that it is impossible for anyone to forget anything – which is great when we look back at our daggy earlier selves, but is one of the prices we pay for our mediatised world.

In recent years, there has been a lot of talk about the possibilities of augmented reality, the next 'big thing', but has digital media already changed the nature of reality as humans have understood it for thousands of years? Think of the language we use to describe our world today. When we speak of a friend, for example, do we mean someone we have actually met? And what about unfriending? When we like a post, is that what we really mean? Has the nature of friendship changed or is it simply our use of language? So much of our lives as we live them and think about them has been changed forever by contemporary media.

Activity 13.29 Digital socialisation: the good, the bad and the ugly

Write a class list of all the ways you and your classmates have been socialised through contemporary media use. Include only those ways of learning to behave acceptably in society that you acquired primarily through digital media.

Now see if you can predict additional digital socialisation that children will experience.

Analyse the issues and challenges of digital socialisation in contemporary society.

PRIVACY

Have you ever heard of a bad guy who intended to get caught? Every burglar or mugger thinks they will get away with it. In a contemporary media world, there is more evidence than ever before. Do the ever-increasing resources of databased media platforms, government, social and institutional, mean that what we think of as privacy has changed? Wanted posters have morphed into Crime Stoppers and now, with the advent of CCTV footage, digital phone video and forensic social media investigation, not only the police but anyone who consumes media can background-check alleged perpetrators or participate in the investigation of a crime. What would you do if you saw someone you know staring out of a news report? This author found it very challenging until she realised that the crime had been committed during class time and the student had been absent on that day.



Weblink

Crimes and other newsworthy events are now uploaded to social media in real time, which means the path from citizen journalism to citizen paparazzi and even digital voyeur can be difficult to tread. In January 2017, a car was driven at high speed down Bourke Street mall, killing several people and injuring many more. As the event unfolded, people shot video, which was uploaded to social media, and professional news organisations competed for the rights to the best footage. The right to privacy of victims and the alleged perpetrator became less important than the story. In an online world, who decides that the needs of public interest outweigh the right to privacy?

Even alleged bad guys have a right to privacy until charged and victims certainly have the right to personal privacy, as the MEAA Journalist Code of Ethics clearly states. Yet, when using social media or CCTV footage, some television outlets blur faces while others do not. Is this ethical?

Privacy is not just an issue for criminals and victims. We cannot *not* leave digital traces of ourselves online. By visiting or signing up to any online media site or platform, you leave evidence of your presence. The use of online trackers results in you being targeted for advertising as your data is collected, aggregated and sold. But it is not just commercial organisations that are interested in your data.

The Australian Government requires telcos and internet service providers to retain metadata of phone and internet use. This includes a record of every call made in Australia, the number that was called, the length and location of the call as well as records of emails, texts and download volumes. Each piece of information on its own does not mean much, but when collated and analysed, this data can build a very powerful image of your life, especially when combined with other publicly available information. While such analysis is not the purpose of data retention, it is useful for investigation of crime and terrorism; however, it is not known exactly how authorised government agencies will use the data.

Of course, the government collects data in many other forms through census, taxation, health, environmental planning and other sources, including the data we all enter on government sites. It would not be possible for the government to plan for the future or run the country without this data. In order to operate in a mediatised world, data is vital for individuals, organisations and governments. How can we balance the right to privacy with the advances in communication offered by contemporary media?

The bottom line is that contemporary media have given media audiences great agency and power, but these freedoms are tempered by the enormous amount of personal data that is collected and stored. Governments and multinational media also possess agency, and huge power. You cannot fully protect your privacy. What do you think?

Activity 13.30 Privacy: yes or no?

Conduct a class debate on the topic of privacy in the contemporary media world, including the ethics of the collection, aggregation and sale of commercial data and the collection and use of government data.

Moral panic is when you stop asking questions and assume you know the answer.

Henry Jenkins, University of Southern California

ARE VIDEO GAMES REALLY STILL CONTROVERSIAL?

For most of the past 40 years, arguments and evidence about the claimed effect of video games have taken up thousands of research hours and considerable space in news and current affairs media. Read about the background on video games on pages 213–18. This information will provide evidence for your discussion of the dynamic and changing relationship between the media and its audiences.

Most early research and press coverage was about the negative influence of video games, much of it centring on the impact of violent content. This research sprang from the effects model of media influence, originating in the United States at a time corresponding with the rise of psychology.

At the same time, two indisputable facts emerged. The first is that gaming is a popular pastime. The industry continued to grow to the point where it now earns more revenue than the film industry and shows no sign of waning. In fact, more people identify as gamers than ever before.

The second fact is that, over this period, violence dropped in those societies where gaming became increasingly popular. This correlation does not mean that games caused the drop, rather that they certainly did not cause violence as was so often claimed.



Weblink

Video games are the quintessential social texts of our present cultural moment.

Steven E Jones, *The Meaning of Video Games*, 2008

In more recent times, the gaming industry began funding research, which, not surprisingly, found that gaming had positive effects on players. Media theorists were left to ask, where does the truth lie? As always, it is about context, the relationship between games, gamers, and the social and economic framework in which both live.

Today gaming research includes the positive effects of games and takes into account the dynamic relationship between games and gamers. To effectively study this relationship, we must ask a lot of questions:

- Who is playing, what and when do they play and who are they playing with?
- Why do gamers play? What do they get from the experience?
- If so many popular games are violent, why isn't violence increasing rather than decreasing?
- Why does violence touch such a raw nerve in society?
- Why do some claim that games have a negative effect, while others claim the opposite?
- Why does research come up with such disparate results?

To find answers to these and other questions about the relationship between games and gamers, we have to turn to the research. Just make sure that the research is robust and recent. Try some of these sites:

- Games Studies
- American Psychological Association, 'The benefits of playing video games'
- Journalists Resources, 'The contested field of violent video games: Research roundup'
- Bond University and IGEA, 'Digital Australia 18 Report'
- Pew Research Centre, 'Gaming and Gamers'
- 'An update to the systematic literature review of empirical evidence of the impacts and outcomes of computer games and serious games'.



Activity 13.31 What does games research tell us about gamers?

Read two or more of the research papers provided in the links above.

- 1 What evidence does media research reveal about how and why people play video games?
- 2 What is the relationship between gamers and games?
- 3 What does the research reveal about the agency and control of games and gamers?

One piece of research, different press reports

In 2015 RMIT academic Alberto Posso published research about the correlation between video games and school achievement. The research is very interesting, as it considers a range of factors that impact on achievement, of which gaming is one. The abstract is provided below.

INTERNET USAGE AND EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES AMONG 15-YEAR-OLD AUSTRALIAN STUDENTS

Alberto Posso

Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology,
Australia

Children in rich countries are using the Internet for social networking and gaming at very high rates, particularly in Australia. This study addresses whether these activities affect educational achievement in mathematics, reading, and science using the Organization for

Economic Cooperation and Development's 2012 Program for International Student Assessment data set. The results suggest that using online social networks reduces academic achievement. Conversely, playing online games increases scores. It is argued that although both activities are associated with a high opportunity cost of study, video games potentially allow students to apply and sharpen skills

learned in school. Skipping school, failing an academic year in the past, and being indigenous are also important predictors of underachievement. It is suggested that monitoring, counselling, and tutoring students who are at risk of failure may be useful.

'Internet and online gaming use and success in schools', *International Journal of Communication* 10(2016)



You can access Posso's research paper by following the weblink.

What is interesting for Media students is the way the research has been reported. Read the newspaper coverage here:

- 'Positive link between video games and academic performance, study suggests'
- 'Teenagers regularly using social media do less well at school, new survey finds'
- 'A measured response'.

Activity 13.32 Reporting research

Compare Posso's research, 'Internet usage and educational outcomes among 15-year-old Australian students', with the news reports.

- 1 Why do you think the reports emphasise different aspects of the research?
- 2 What does the reporting reveal about society's underlying concerns about computer games today?
- 3 What does the research and how it was reported reveal about the changing relationship between the media and its audiences?

AGENCY AND CONTROL IN CONTEMPORARY MEDIA: WHAT DO WE KNOW AND WHERE TO NEXT?

In 1969 sociologists Paul Lazarsfeld and Robert Merton asked what were 'the effects of the existence of media in our society'. Note the question, what were the *effects* of the *existence* of media *in* our society? They were not asking about the effects of media on audiences but were interested in understanding how the media had impacted society. This question is still relevant today and has been at the heart of this area of study.

The media of the mid-20th century is a world away from the media of today. Although its legacy is evident in the continued dominance of the major corporations that create, distribute and control what this chapter has termed 'traditional' media – that is, media of the print, broadcast and publicly screened era – contemporary media in the form of digital and online products and platforms has significantly shifted the ways we think about the relationship between audiences, the media and society.

Audiences have both greater and less agency and control over the media they consume, while media corporations are challenged by the changing practices of audiences and their expectations of instant and always-on media delivery. At the same time, new media forms and platforms have seen audiences move into the creation and distribution of media products, but only under the terms and conditions specified by the structures of huge social media corporations.

In this area of study, you have learnt that there is no one way of considering the relationship between the media and its audiences. Every argument and piece of evidence is contextual, dependent on the society and circumstance in which it is formulated. Now it is time to put all that you have learnt together.

Activity 13.33 Agency and control: organising your learning

The key knowledge and skills associated with this area of study are fabulous dot points under which to organise your learning. They are on page 337.

For each dot point, collect arguments and evidence. Find examples and use the evidence to substantiate your discussion, evaluation and analysis of each argument. Tying your knowledge to the trigger terms (instructional verbs, the things you have to do in assessment) will help you demonstrate not only facts but also analytical higher-order thinking skills.

Show your notes to your teacher and ask for guidance on how to use them to prepare for assessment.

READING SELF-PORTRAITS

The artists' statements below relate to the images in Activity 3.34 on page 93.

Downhill is a striking visual exploration of the joy of mountain biking, the thrill of competition and the importance of spending time with mates.

Joey Knox, *Downhill*, 2013

Everybody has a masculine and feminine side to their face. Through the digital manipulation of two photographs I have halved my face and found my masculine and feminine side. Each is symmetrical; though standing back you might believe that these are two different people. I'm asking 'What are the characteristics that make a woman look like a woman and a man look like a man'. I also want to address and confuse issues such as gender identity and the roles we play because of the way we look.

Bridget Mac, *masculine/feminine*, 2010, Winner of the National Youth Self Portrait Prize 2010

GLOSSARY

acting The use of voice, movement, body language, gestures and facial expressions to create character. See page 281

advergame An online video game that promotes a brand, product or marketing message by integrating it into the game

agency An action or intervention producing a particular effect or having power; the ability to make choices and act on them

agenda setting The process where the media selects, shapes and publishes news through the mechanism of gatekeeping, choosing which news it believes audiences should think is important. The media cannot tell you what to think, but it can tell you what to think about

allegory An aspect of a text that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, often revealing the text's ideology

analogue media Media forms where the signal is continuously variable, such as magnetic tape and early phone systems. Analogue media is subject to degradation each time it is copied

antagonist The main character in opposition to the protagonist or hero of a narrative

archetype An original model from which others may be copied, such as a hero or a villain

art elements and design principles Terms used in the creation, structure and analysis of art and media works, including line, colour, tone, texture, shape, form, type, sound, light, time, balance, contrast, hierarchy, emphasis/focal point, movement, proportion, repetition/pattern, rhythm, scale, space, unity and variety. See page 38

aspect ratio The ratio between the width and the height of an image. Early film and television aspect ratio was 4×3 (1.33:1), widescreen TV and film aspect ratio is 16×9 (1.85:1) and CinemaScope movie ratio is 2.35:1

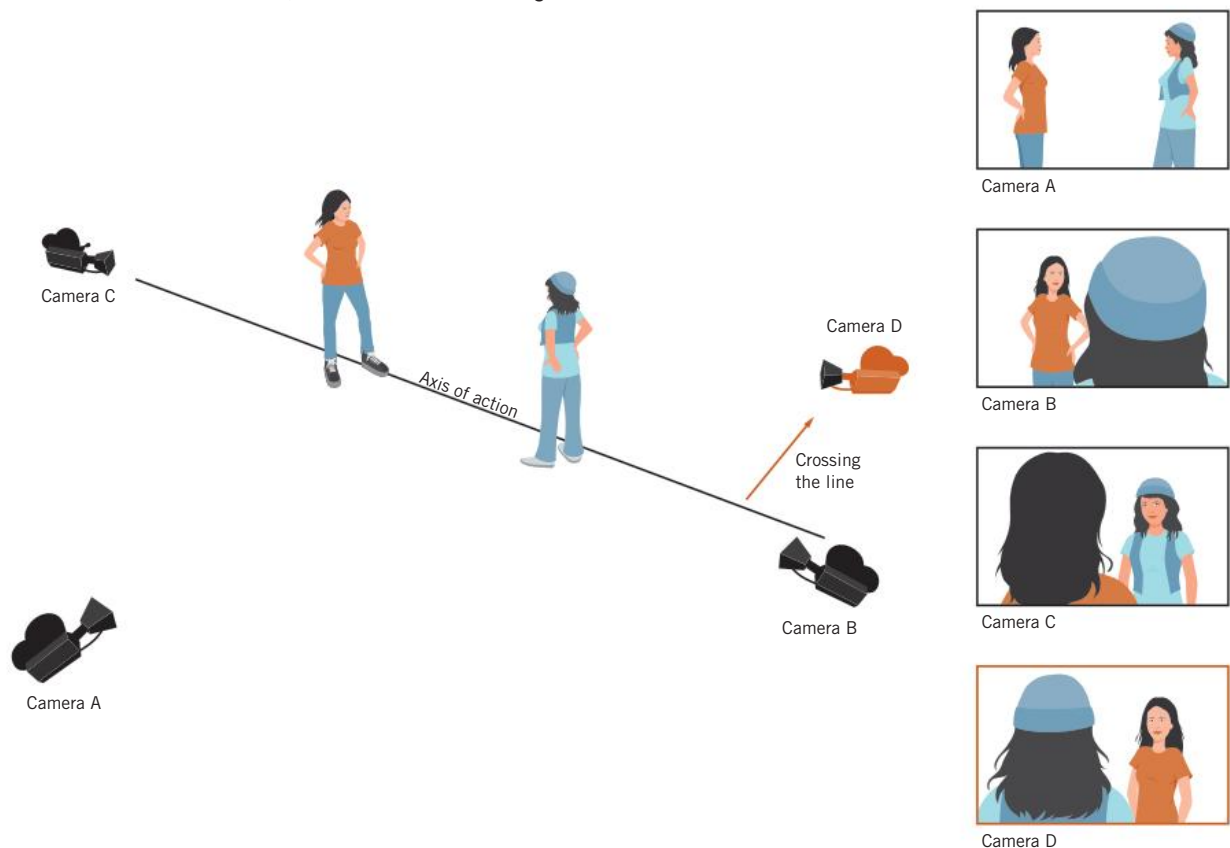
audience The consumers or users of a media product; may also be referred to as a 'market'

augmented reality The integration of digital images, sound or information into a user's environment via technology such as apps and projection. The first widespread use was *Pokemon Go*

auteur theory The idea that the director of a film is the creator in the same way that an author creates a novel

avatar A computer user's representation of himself/herself, or alter ego

axis of action An imaginary line drawn between the two main characters or sources of action in a film or TV narrative. Cameras never cross the axis of action; this is called the '180-degree rule'



binary opposition Where texts are organised around sets of opposite values, such as good and evil

blocking The positioning and movement of characters within a frame in relation to the camera

broadcasting The transmission of a television or radio text to a wide audience

B-roll Footage of supplementary material that can be inserted as cutaways into a film as an alternative to the main shot. B-roll provides variety and meaning while hiding unwanted footage

cause and effect A stimulus and response, also referred to as 'action and reaction'. Cause and effect implies narrative progression from an initial event that triggers a narrative through a series of linked events that develop the plot through to a resolution

character A person, persona or entity that exists in a media text. Traditionally refers to fictional texts, but has come to be used in non-fiction texts

character arc The way in which a character is introduced, developed and resolved. A character arc may be contained in one text or span several episodes of a series

chiaroscuro lighting Low-key lighting that produces strong contrast between light and dark in an often stylised manner

cinéma-vérité French for 'cinema truth'; a documentary form that shows its subjects in actual activities. This documentary movement emphasised the use of available light, hand-held cameras and long takes. Films in this style tend to strive for as much realism and as little director intervention as possible

circular narrative A narrative structure where the action begins and ends at the same point in time, or where the narrative returns to the same plot point

circulation The number of magazines or newspapers distributed for each issue

classical narrative cinema/classical Hollywood cinema A filmmaking style based on the principle of continuity editing, which is character-driven, and in which style is subordinate to narrative. Production elements do not draw attention to themselves and exist to construct a sense of realism, in which the narrative goal is resolution and closure

clickbait Eye-catching online content that encourages the reader to click through to another page

closed text A text constructed to allow a very limited range of audience interpretation. See also *open text*

code Technical, symbolic and written tools used to structure and suggest meaning in a media text. Media codes include the use of camera, acting, setting, mise en scène, editing, lighting, sound, special effects, typography, colour, visual composition, text and graphics

communication model A theoretical and simplified representation that serves as a visual metaphor of a communication process

communication theory A set of systematic informed generalisations about how a communication process may work

conceptual photography A style of photography that illustrates an idea

connotation The meanings that words, images and sounds suggest beyond the literal description or denotation

constructivism The idea that individuals actively construct their own knowledge and meaning, rather than passively absorbing it from texts

content research The study of the content of media texts. This may involve counting numbers of types of people or events, the language used or patterns of storytelling across texts

continuity editing Arranging a sequence of shots to suggest a logical and 'natural' progression of events in time or space. The most common form of editing

control All the actions undertaken by media industries and organisations, governments, stakeholders and individuals that structure media availability and consumption

convention A rule or commonly accepted way of constructing a text to suggest meaning. Media conventions include story forms and structure, generic structures, character and story arcs, cause and effect, the manipulation and structure of time, the form and structure of print for different purposes, elements of page layout, the use of hyperlinks in web pages and the allocation of rewards to encourage players to move through a game

convergent media The combination and joining of different media forms and/or texts

copy Words/text for layout in print publications

copyright Legal protection for people who create and express ideas and information in certain forms. The most common forms are: writing, visual images, music and moving images. Copyright protects the form or way an idea or information is expressed, not the idea or information itself

countertype A positive stereotype

Creative Commons A non-profit licensing system for distributing cultural, educational and scientific content for legal sharing, use, repurposing and remixing

cropping Selecting that part of an image that conveys the message the photographer wants an audience to see and omitting the remainder of the image

crossmedia The same story presented in different ways across multiple channels

crossmedia ownership The ability to own media in different forms. In Australia there are laws preventing ownership of too many media outlets in one city

deconstruction The process of breaking down and analysing a media text to determine the elements and underlying assumptions of its construction

deep focus Both foreground and background are in focus at the one time

demographic A particular sector of a population. Demographics can be defined by factors such as age, gender, occupation or income

denotation The simple description of what can be seen or heard

denouement The period after the climax of a narrative, during which loose ends are resolved

depth of field The distance between the closest and furthestmost points of focus; how much of a shot is in focus and where this focus is located in the image – foreground, middle ground or background

diegesis The world of a narrative. Everything that would ‘naturally’ appear in this world and that the characters can experience, including places, characters and sounds, is diegetic

diegetic sound Sound coming from a character or object in the storyworld that can be heard by characters in that world. It may be manipulated or exaggerated to emphasise meaning. See also *non-diegetic sound*

digital An electronic system that stores information in binary form. Digital information is exactly reproducible

digital distribution Online content delivery of media texts, including streamed and downloadable media

digital divide The contrast between information-rich and information-poor audiences

digital immigrant A person born before the introduction of digital technologies, who had to learn how these technologies work

digital media Refers to both the institutions and infrastructures that create and distribute content and the content itself. Digital media is electronic; information is created, stored and transmitted in binary form. Digital information is exactly reproducible

digital native A person born after the introduction of digital technologies, for whom such communication has always been a part of life

digitisation The process of converting analogue media products into digital information

direct cinema A documentary form that emerged in the 1960s, where the camera became a ‘fly on the wall’

discourse The creation and circulation of meaning in society through the interrelationships between texts, audiences and media organisations. A discourse is like an ongoing discussion between individuals, organisations and the media about an idea or social issue. Discourse assumes that language simultaneously reflects and constructs reality

docudrama A fact-based representation of real events in dramatic form

docusoap A documentary constructed in soap opera form

dominant reading The way most people are believed to understand a text

editing The selection and joining of vision and/or sound to construct meaning. See ‘The editor’s toolbox’ in Chapter 9, page 275

edutainment TV, radio and internet programming that seeks to entertain as well as inform

ellipsis The periods of time left out of a narrative through the process of editing

equilibrium The state of balance that exists at the beginning of a narrative where the world of the characters is relatively normal before it is disrupted by tensions or events that cause disequilibrium. In most narratives, equilibrium is restored as a result of the climax. Closely associated with classical narrative cinema

exposition The first stage of a narrative, which sets up the plot and provides background on characters, setting and story

expository documentary An early documentary style that became the dominant form, where a voice-over in the form of a narrator explains the meaning of the accompanying visuals

eyeline match An editing technique based on the idea that the audience will want to see what a character is looking at. For example, a character looks at something; if you cut to the subject or object of this attention, you create the illusion of continuity between two different shots

film noir A style of film from the 1940s and 1950s that has urban settings and deals with corruption and the dark side of life. Characters are often stereotyped. Much of the film may be darkly lit

first-person documentary A documentary where a subject constructs and produces a story about themselves or a subject of personal concern

filter bubble The result of personalised searches when the search algorithm selects information based on the user's previous history

flashback A narrative device in which a transition to an event or scene depicts events that occur before the scene that precedes it, thus interrupting the chronological order of the narrative

flash forward A narrative device in which a transition to an event or scene depicts events that occur after the scene that precedes it, thus interrupting the chronological order of the narrative

flat lay A photograph of objects laid out on a flat surface that is shot from above

focal point An element of composition designed to attract and hold the eye of the audience. Also means the point at which light entering a perfect lens converges

Foley artist The artist responsible for creating sounds, both realistic and artificial, that will be added to a film, TV or radio soundtrack. See page 278

font One weight, width and style that describes a typeface; for example, **Arial Bold Italic 12 pt.** See also *typeface*

foreshadowing A metaphoric or symbolic indication of something to come

frame The rectangle formed by the edge of a visual image

framing The way objects and people are positioned within a shot

gamification The application of game principles and design elements to non-game contexts

gatekeeping The process by which news organisations select and reject stories for publication. See also *news values*

genre A method of grouping texts according to the story and production elements they have in common, including storylines, setting, character types, subjects and themes

graphical user interface A computer user interface based on graphics such as icons, images and menus instead of text, and which uses a mouse or tracking device as well as a keyboard as an input device

green light A term originating in the Hollywood studio system that means that a proposal can move into production. To green-light a project means to give it formal approval

hegemony The process by which dominant ideology is maintained through winning the consent of the masses

high culture Those aspects of culture that are most highly valued by a given society's political, social, economic and intellectual elite. See also *popular culture*

homage Paying respect or demonstrating admiration for a media practitioner whose work is admired

hybrid media The result of the joining of media forms leading to the development of new media forms; for example, photography and social media hybridised to become Instagram

hypermediacy The tendency of new media to draw attention to itself by multiplying the signs of mediation through, for example, text, sound and graphics on a web page

hypodermic or bullet theory The media shoots messages directly into an audience, which receives these messages and is influenced by them

ideology A system of ideas and beliefs that are used to explain or make sense of society. Ideology forms the basis of society's values, economic or political theory and policy

immediacy The desire of media audiences to be immediately in touch with reality in an apparently unmediated and transparent way

infotainment TV, radio and internet programming that combines commercial information with entertainment

intangible media products Media that cannot be held or touched; audience engagement is time-based and structured by the creator or producer; for example, films, radio, animation, television

intellectual property Creations of the mind, such as films, artworks, music, books, written texts, designs, symbols and images

interactivity A reciprocal process of communication between a user and technology that influences the form and/or content of a media product

intertextuality The process of drawing on, even unconsciously, other texts to provide a structure of meaning

juxtaposition The placing of usually contrasting elements next to each other, thereby strengthening the impact of one or both and creating new insights on the part of the audience

landscape Description of image dimensions in which the width is greater than the height. See *portrait*

leitmotif Pronounced 'light-motif'; a recurring piece of music or melody that is used in film and television to represent a character, theme or type of action

lighting Light sources used to illuminate an image or scene. Naturalistic lighting is artificial lighting that simulates what audiences would expect to see in the real world and constructs a sense of realism in a text. Expressive lighting is the construction of the lighting design to deliberately and non-naturalistically emphasise or draw attention to mood, character, motif, location, ideas and/or themes. See Chapter 9, page 271

linear narrative A narrative structure in which the plot unfolds in the order in which the characters experience it. See also *non-linear narrative*

listicle An article composed as a list

long-form journalism A form of writing in which subjects are explored in greater length and depth than usual. Often used in documentary journalism or creative non-fiction

Lorem Ipsum Placeholder or filler text used when designing print to simulate the look of the final product before the text has been written

market share The portion of a market controlled by one company or product

masthead The title of a magazine or newspaper that appears on the cover or front page

matte The compositing of two or more separately filmed images into a single final shot. Traditional matte makers were artists who painted the matte; today digital techniques, including green screen and special effects technologies, have enabled sophisticated process shots

media Plural of *medium*

media convergence The merging of media forms and texts

media form The technological means and channels by which the media is produced, such as television, film, video, animation, photography, radio, podcast, magazine, graphic novel, newspaper

media platform Technologies that allow media producers, users and consumers to interface with each other

media processes The procedures involved in creating or communicating information or ideas

media product A text or a group of texts in any media form designed and created for audience consumption

media text A media product

mediation The processes by which reality is shaped through the ways it is reconstructed by media creators and institutions into representations in media texts

mediatisation A theory that argues that the media shapes and frames the processes and discourse of communication as well as the society in which that communication takes place

medium A media form

metanarrative A narrative about narratives, often the meaning of life. Also known as a grand narrative

metaphor An element of a text that is symbolic

miniseries A television narrative structured in a predetermined, limited number of episodes

mise en scène A French term that literally means ‘placing on stage’ and refers to the selection and arrangement of everything that can be seen in a shot or frame. This includes the way in which set design, framing of shots, props, costume, lighting and staging are constructed

mock-up A visual representation of a proposed photographic or print image

montage The technique of combining image, sound and/or video elements from a range of sources into a single product that suggests meaning through affinity or contrast

moral panic A fear that something will destroy societal or cultural values. In media terms, this often means a new technology, media form or text

motif A recurring element that suggests meaning beyond its literal meaning; it represents an idea. Motif may take the form of an object, character, colour, sound or action

multiple storylines Storylines that run parallel to, comment on or intersect with the main storyline

narrative The selection, sequencing and construction of the relevant events from a story. Narratives are created to communicate meaning

narrative possibilities The different directions in which a narrative may develop as a result of the genre, style, mood, location, events, characters and narrative trigger established by the opening

native advertising Advertising formatted to look like news or informative articles. Sometimes referred to as ‘sponsored content’

naturalise The repeated exposure to representations that increasingly suggest reality as the audience understands it

negotiated reading When an audience must make some mental adjustments to overcome disagreement with the messages in a text

networked database media platforms Connected hardware or software used to host an online application or service. User data is collected, aggregated and sold to pay for the platform, enabling users to consume for free or at a cost below the cost of the service

new media Digital media technologies

news agency An organisation that gathers news, opinion and photographs to sell to subscribing news outlets

news values The criteria that determine the selection, construction and presentation of news items

non-diegetic sound Sound added to the soundtrack that does not originate from the scene or storyworld; for example, narration, music or sound effects (SFX). Used to add tension or emotion

non-linear narrative Temporal order is constructed in a manner other than that in which the story occurs

observational documentary A documentary form in which material is filmed in such a way as to allow the subject to reveal its own story. See also *direct cinema* and *cinéma-vérité*

omniscient Storytelling that is told from an all-knowing, all-seeing point of view, often associated with voice-over

open text A text constructed to allow the reader freedom to interpret meaning according to their own reading. A range of readings are possible and defensible

oppositional reading An audience reading that is different from that intended by the makers of a text

outline A brief explanation of what a production will be about, covering style, audience and content

parallelism Two or more storylines in a narrative running parallel to each other, never meeting, but commenting on each other through characters, actions, events or themes

paywall A system that blocks users from a site until they have paid a subscription

pitch A concise presentation outlining the key elements of a proposed production. May be supported with illustrations that illustrate aspects of the proposal

plot Comprises only the events in a narrative text that are revealed to the audience, including any added non-diegetic material such as special effects. See also *story*

point of view A story element referring to the point from which the narrative is presented. May refer to a character, the director or the audience. Different from a POV shot

polysemic messages Capable of more than one interpretation or reading

popular culture The cultural meaning systems and cultural practices used and enjoyed by the majority of people in a society. Popular culture may also be referred to as 'low culture', and is often discussed in contrast to 'high culture'

portrait Description of image dimensions in which the height is greater than the width

postmodernism The trends in art, literature and the media that developed as a reaction to modernism and emphasise the importance of individual expression and interpretation. The creation of products that self-consciously and playfully draw upon, borrow and combine different, often conflicting, ideas, styles, forms and stories from a range of media and art forms. Postmodernism does not believe in empirical views of the nature of truth

preferred reading The interpretation intended by a text's producer

production values The style, quality and expense of the elements used in the construction of media texts

produser A social media content producer and user. Produsage sees the line between production and media consumption as blurring

protagonist The leading character in a text

ratings The estimated number of people who watch or listen to broadcast programs

readership The number of people who read a print product, such as newspaper or magazine. Readership is different from circulation because more than one person may read a copy of a text

reading When media audiences make meaning from the texts they are consuming, media students call this 'making a reading'. A reading may be individual to the reader or shared with other audience members

realism The dominant form of representation in mainstream media. A combination of form, style and content that constructs a text so that it has a sense of material or psychological reality for an audience

reality media Text forms in which non-actor participants are recorded for entertainment purposes. Sometimes referred to as 'non-scripted narratives'

reception context The circumstances in which a text is consumed, including physical location, method and quality of broadcast or reproduction, reason for consuming the text, impact of other audience members on the consumption of a text and any other factors, such as the sociopolitical ideologies of the society in which the text is read, that may alter an audience's reading of a text

reception studies The study of how and why audiences use and interpret the media

referencing The act of referring to, using or adapting techniques or ideas created by another media practitioner or artist

reflexive documentary A documentary form that continuously draws attention to its construction and questions the notion of truth and authority

remediation The representation of one media form in another media form

reportage The art of photographing or recording events as they happen

representation The media construction of an object, person, place or idea in which particular elements of reality are intentionally selected and emphasised over others to represent, or re-present reality in order to suggest a meaning greater than or different from the original. Representations reflect the ideology and values of their creators

rule of thirds A basic element of photographic composition in which frame is trisected vertically and horizontally. The subject should be placed at the intersection of a vertical and horizontal line; this allows for tension, energy, balance and equilibrium within the image

scene A series of shots within one location

screenplay The formatted written text of a film, television program or video game

script The formatted written text of an audio production

semiotics The study of signs and symbols and their use or interpretation in communication. See also *signification practices*

serial A TV, radio or online text where the storyline continues from one episode to the next

series A TV, radio or online text where each episode is a self-contained narrative

shot One take between 'action' and 'cut'. Also the selection and framing of an image. Shots are also described by angle: low, high or straight-on (eye) level. The camera may tilt, pan or zoom. It may move via a crane, track, dolly or vehicle, or be hand-held

- close-up (CU): sometimes referred to as 'big close-up'; the head or an object of interest fills the frame; invites the audience to consider a character's emotion and motivation

- dolly zoom: also known as the 'Hitchcock shot' for its use in *Vertigo*; the camera zooms in while being dollied out, maintaining figures at the same size within the frame
- establishing shot: locates action in time and space; may also establish genre, mood and narrative possibilities
- extreme close-up (ECU): frames a portion of a face or other significant bodily feature, or a significant part of an object
- extreme long shot (ELS): conveys location, but figures are too small to convey emotion
- long shot (LS): figures are recognisable, but the location is the dominant feature of the frame
- master shot: a recording of an entire scene, start to finish, from an angle that keeps all the actors in view
- medium close-up (MCU): frames the figure from the chest up; invites attention to the character filling the frame
- mid or medium shot (MS): figures are shot from about the waist up; background is still a feature
- noddie: reaction shots of an unseen interviewer; commonly used in current affairs and documentaries
- over-the-shoulder shot: a shot of one actor taken from over the shoulder of another actor
- point of view (POV): a shot taken as if through a character's eyes
- pull focus: the depth of field changes from focusing one character or part of set to another
- reverse shot: a shot from the point of view of the opposite side of the previous shot, such as cutting between two characters talking, or the shot that follows a point of view shot; can be cut together as shot-reverse shot
- two shot: a medium shot of two subjects, usually framed from the chest up



Extreme long shot (ELS)



Medium close-up (MCU)



Extreme close-up (ECU)



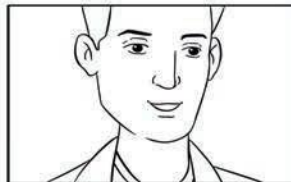
Long shot (LS)



Mid or medium shot (MS)



Two shot



Close-up (CU)



Over-the-shoulder shot

signification practices Meaning-making activities. The production, exchange and making meaning from signs

soap opera A serial drama focusing on the lives of characters. The term originates from the sponsorship of these dramas by soap manufacturers when they were first broadcast on radio

social media Media forms where participants use and create media with the purpose of interacting and sharing with others

social media influencer A person with a large number of followers. May be paid in goods or money for mentioning products

sound Dialogue, voice, music, atmosphere and sound effects used in audiovisual productions. See Chapter 9, page 276

sound perspective The apparent special relationship between sound and image. Perspective is a three-dimensional concept

soundscape An immersive aural environment created by recording and editing sound

speed ramping The process whereby the capture frame rate of the camera changes. Films are normally shot at 24 frames per second (fps). If shot at a higher rate and played at 24 fps, the motion is slowed. This effect can also be achieved in editing

spin The process of constructing an individual, organisation or issue designed to portray the subject in a particular light. Designed to persuade audiences either for or against the issue

stakeholder A person or organisation with an interest in or something to win or lose in a debate or issue

stereotype An oversimplified representation of a person, group, place or idea that has been repeated so often it appears natural

story All the events of the narrative: those made known to the audience, and those inferred but not necessarily revealed

story arc A storyline that is introduced, developed and resolved. A story arc may be contained in one text or span several episodes of a series

storyboard A series of drawings and written directions representing all shots in a film or video production

subtext Underlying themes or meaning of a story

surveillance capitalism The process of data collection, aggregation and sale that facilitated the personalisation of online media content. See page 192

susceptible audience An audience demographic that is considered more likely to be affected by media messages than most people

suspension of disbelief The emotional and psychological state that audiences allow themselves to believe the unbelievable as they engage with the world (diegesis) of the narrative journey created by a media maker

syndication The supply of news or current affairs by an agency that licenses its publication in a range of newspapers or news sites

synopsis A brief outline of the plot or subject matter of a media text

tangible media products Physical media forms that the audience can touch and determine the length of their engagement with the product; for example, magazines, web pages, games, photographs. Also referred to as 'space-based media'

target audience or market The audience or market the producers of a media product have in mind when they are creating and promoting the product

technological determinism The belief that technology can cause, change or shape behaviour or society

temporal duration The manipulation of time from real time to reel time; that is, the foreshortening or expansion of time and the length of time events are portrayed on screen

temporal frequency The number of times an event or part of an event is shown to an audience

temporal order The structuring of events, which may include chronological order, flashbacks and/or flash forwards

text A media product

textual analysis A close study of one or more texts

third-person effect The psychological phenomenon where an individual or group overestimates the effect of the media on the beliefs, attitudes and behaviour of others but underestimates these effects on themselves

time shift The practice of using video or digital recorders to copy a program for viewing at a time other than the scheduled broadcast time

transmedia The publication of self-contained texts across different media platforms that together form a metanarrative

treatment Outline of the main story arc, character arcs and style of a proposed media production

trope A figure of speech or recurring storytelling pattern, plot device or overused storyline. Media makers and audiences both understand the elements of the trope, so it does not have to be explained each time it is used

typeface A particular design or style of an alphabet in type; for example, Arial. See also *font*

typography The art of designing type and also the style and arrangement of words in the form of type

values The beliefs that underpin the behaviours of individuals and the community

visual composition The composition of an image or scene. See *mise en scène*

vox pop Popular opinion represented by informal comments by members of the public in video, sound or writing

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OVERVIEW

- Written for the 2018 VCE Media Study Design
- Includes new and updated activities
- Features contemporary examples with a focus on local media where possible
- Additional online resources for students and teachers